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उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED.

Vol. 101

MARCH 1996

No. 3

Divine Wisdom

CALMING THE MIND

चेतः खल्वस्य बन्धाय मुक्तये चात्मनो मतम् ।
गुणेषु सक्तं बन्धाय रतं वा पुंसि मुक्तये ॥

ज्ञानवैराग्ययुक्तेन भक्तियुक्तेन चात्मना ।
परिपश्यत्युदासीनं प्रकृतिं च हतौजसम् ॥

It is the view of wise men that the mind indeed is the cause of both the bondage and liberation of embodied beings. If the mind is attached to the Gunas of Prakriti and their products, it leads to bondage; but when it begins to feel delight and attraction for the Lord (Purusha), it leads to liberation.

अहंममाभिमानोत्थैः कामलोभादिभिर्मलैः ।
वीतं यदा मनः शुद्धमदुःखमसुखं समम् ॥

When the mind is freed from impurities of lust and greed generated by the sense of 'I' and 'mine', it attains to purity and rests in equanimity, being unaffected by pleasure or pain.

तदा पुरुष आत्मानं केवलं प्रकृतेः परम् ।
निरन्तरं स्वयंज्योतिरणिमानमखण्डितम् ॥

Then the Jiva, endowed with knowledge, renunciation and devotion, experiences in truth the Supreme Spirit transcending Nature (Prakriti)—Kevala (untouched by anything), eternal, self-effulgent, subtle, indivisible and unconcerned—as well as Prakriti with all its binding power destroyed.

न युज्यमानया भक्त्या भगवत्यखिलात्मनि ।
सदृशोऽस्ति शिवः पन्था योगिनां ब्रह्मसिद्धये ॥

For one aspiring to attain Brahman, there is no path more straight, safe and practical than that of loving devotion for the Supreme Lord who is the soul of all.

From the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*
III.25.15–19

Sustaining Our Aspiration

Suitable Company

Have you watched someone clamber up a metal pole smeared with oil? Then tried it yourself? 99 out of the 100 who try give up after a few attempts and failures. So it is with all difficult activities, especially those we think we can live without. Nevertheless, the fact remains that there are people who have mastered pole-climbing or such other strenuous activities. Besides, it is also a fact that we too have learned several things since childhood though we had tried and failed at first. For instance, this simple thing as walking or riding a bicycle, which in the beginning was so laborious.

So, how do 'impossible' things become possible? The answer, lying deep under all our learned activities, is rarely mentioned among the chief aids to successful learning. That answer is: congenial company. Most of those who persisted in anything to master it are the fortunate ones who got the company of like-minded or 'advanced' people (we are not talking about gurus).

Through such association our pursuits become steady. We are progressively convinced, and satisfied, that we are on the right track, and that the goal is achievable. Only with the dawn of this certitude do we begin to derive joy from whatever we are grappling with—research, chess, athletics, anthropology, or back-breaking archeological surveys. Hence the proliferation of Clubs, Wings, Associations, Societies, and such other special groups.

The more trying, uncommon, creative,

lonely and continuous our pursuits, the more indispensable are such fraternizations. A bank clerk doesn't need regular 'like-minded' company; neither does a bus driver. But a to-be musician? An aspiring ocean-diver? A researcher? An artist or a photographer? There are several such fields which are difficult, uncommon, etc., spiritual life topping the list. In our youthful immaturity we give up developing them, perhaps after trying for a while. This cursory attitude is common because, as we said, deep down people feel that such pursuits are not basic to a healthy life. It is only later that we understand there is more to life than making money and physical enjoyment; we realize how necessary higher—intellectual, cultural and spiritual—aspirations are. Then we see too how helpful is the frequent meeting of similar minds.

Our Predicament

This is absolutely true of spiritual aspirants. The company of like-minded people is one of the most powerful aids to spiritual progress. Difficult as *sādhana* (spiritual discipline) is, beset with various obstacles, it is also discouragingly prolonged. The goal seems to be ever-receding, as though someone with a strange sense of humour was shifting the 'touch-line' farther and farther!

Besides, in today's society spiritual aspirants are loners, isolated, each on an island, as it were, surrounded by an ocean of contrary ideas, sometimes even within one's own home. Under such conditions beginners are likely to feel hopeless. Without supportive company they may even

begin to think that their aspiration is after all futile. They may feel disheartened, give up all struggle and float with the main social current. Even those of us who have been somehow holding on to our *sādhana* stand exposed to the danger of losing steam, losing the determination that is necessary to persist walking on the razor's edge that the inward life is. Not that the rightness of our goal is ever in doubt. But the rarity of enthusing company nearly succeeds in reducing us to nominal aspirants; we face the risk of falling prey to inertia and temptations. These, we know, are among the obstructions identified by Patanjali in his *Yoga-Sūtras*: ...mental laziness ...lack of enthusiasm, lethargy, clinging to sense enjoyments...(1.10).

Holy Company

To keep up steam, despite having to deal most of the time with people without higher aspiration, we must seek holy company. Even for persons living in monasteries, who these days have to be very much in contact with the society at large, regular meetings or classes are necessary. This is true notwithstanding the fact that a monastery does indeed provide a good deal of seclusion and protection. So, suitable company becomes all the more crucial for householders who are serious about progress. It is holy company alone, rather God's grace in the form of our being able to secure such company, that can help us sustain our 'uncommonest' yearning.

Sri Ramakrishna has said: 'But the worldly man must live in the company of the holy. It is necessary for all, even for sannyasins. But it is especially necessary for the householder. His disease has become chronic because he has to live constantly in the midst of "woman" and "gold"' (p. 250).¹ When asked, 'Sir, is it ever possible to realize God while leading the life of a householder?' he asserted: 'Certainly. But as I said

just now, one must live in holy company... (p. 23). Once milk gets mixed with water, only with great difficulty can it be recovered—by boiling the mixture for a long time. Similarly, if we mix with all sorts of worldly people, we imperceptibly lose our ideal. We lose our former zeal for *sadhana*. The power of association is obvious in daily life: the sight of a doctor arouses in us thoughts, pictures and talk about diseases, patients and hospitals; that of a soldier, discipline, courage, war, patriotism, etc. Similarly, the sight of a holy person stimulates our spiritual propensities.

Sri Ramakrishna compares holy company with the water in which rice has been washed. This water fed to a drunk neutralizes his intoxication. So too does holy company dispel our self-forgetful intoxication with mundane things. 'You know very well the suffering of the world. You suffer whenever you accept enjoyment. As long as the kite kept the fish in its beak, it was tormented by the flock of crows. One finds peace of mind in the company of holy men' (p. 383). '...The world is like a thorny bush: you have hardly freed yourself from one set of thorns before you find yourself entangled in another...Living in the world, a man becomes seared, as it were.' 'Then what is the way, sir?' 'Prayer and the company of holy men....' 'What is the good of holy company?' 'It begets yearning for God. It begets love of God. Nothing whatsoever is achieved in spiritual life without yearning. By constantly living in the company of holy men, the soul becomes restless for God...' (p. 21). Even moist wood dries up and burns when placed in fire. In like manner holy company drives away sensual attachment from polluted minds, lighting it up with thoughtfulness, discrimination and hanker-

1. All page numbers referred to are of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* by 'M', Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 600 004; 1974.

ing for God.

Besides, it reduces to some extent the effort we would have to put in for spiritual growth were we all on our own. This is like someone taking advantage of a fire lit by another to keep away cold. Underlying all these benefits, there is that great silent power of prayer and blessings of the holy ones for whoever comes seeking their company.

Proof of Soul

Again, it is no small matter to overcome our old habit of biological self-identification. For, it keeps asserting itself and creating all sorts of impediments—sometimes fooling us to doubt the sanity of our choice of a spiritual objective. That can be overcome only through holy company—watching spiritual hankering in action, watching how they strive to assert and stabilize their soul-identity. Once a person asked Sri Ramakrishna: ‘Sir, what is the proof that the soul is separate from the body?’ He replied:

Proof? God can be seen. By practising spiritual discipline one sees God, through His grace....One cannot know the truth about God through science... (which) gives us information only about things perceived by the senses....For this reason a man cannot comprehend spiritual things with his ordinary intelligence. To understand them he must live in the company of holy persons. You learn to feel the pulse by living with a physician (p. 381).

Living examples alone persuade our mind to accept that there is joy in spiritual life, in giving up, in minimizing wants, and in leading a life of discrimination. That self-control is not Freudian repression; that, on the contrary, Freudian free impulse-expression is repression—of our intrinsic nobler urges to sacrifice, chasten cravings, share,

and seek higher forms of self-culture. Holy company impels us to put precept into practice.

One with a proper understanding attained through holy company, as the *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* (7.8.1) says, उत्थाता भवति ...परिचरिता ...उपसत्ता ...द्रष्टा ...श्रोता ...मन्ता ...बोद्धा ...कर्ता ...विज्ञाता भवति : *utthāta bhavati ... paricaritā ...upasattā ...draṣṭā ...śrotā ... mantā ...boddhā ...kartā ...vijñātā bhavati*, becomes inspire ...serves them ...becomes close and dear to them ...begins to observe ...heed ...contemplate ...comprehend...put into practice ...gains practical knowledge: with holy company one becomes inspired; he begins to serve them, feeling they are his true near and dear ones; he attends to their needs, even those that are apparently not connected with sadhana; thus he becomes close and dear to them; having come close he attentively observes their conduct; seeing that their word and deed are in harmony, he begins to listen heedfully to their instructions; he ponders over their teachings; thus intellectual knowledge arises in him, ‘What they say is logical. This is indeed so.’ With this certitude he puts their teachings into practice. Consequently he wins practical knowledge.

Risks

We may all agree that holy company is what we are missing, and that that is why our progress is slow. Still, a few points should be borne in mind. Holy company is effective only if we are also alert, regular in our sadhana, and withdraw now and then into solitude—to ruminate so to say over what we have received from such company. For, association with holy persons does not assure spiritual awakening or warmth as unilaterally as by sitting near ‘a fire lit by someone else’: Certainly not. Such meetings can and do often end up in ‘holy’ gossip, innocent socialization, and a false sense of improvement and superiority. So, too much

of 'holy company' does no good.

There is one more danger: Since each person has a characteristic line of sadhana so far as the details are concerned, and a speed of progress, we may unintentionally disturb each other's life. Competitiveness is a natural human trait. In spiritual life too our mind may tempt us subtly to show off to others that we are 'advanced'.

Nevertheless, since the advantages far outweigh the hazards, those eager to give a fillip to their spiritual efforts must cultivate holy company, albeit with due care. This means we should be able to identify the right persons with whom we can profitably discuss spiritual matters. How to go about this?

Fortunately, we get some guidance from Sri Ramakrishna. What are the characteristics of holy persons? They are holy whose aspiration for God is genuine and steady. The proof of this is to be found in the extent to which they have conquered lust. Further, they maintain a dignified distance from and a palpably pure and respectful relationship with members of the opposite sex; in their presence we feel they are, as it were, surrounded constantly by a ring of the fire of purity. Second, a holy person has no greed. Then, with the idea that God resides in all, they serve all beings as best as possible.

Again, we find that in the case of 'unripe' holy people, conversation may begin enthusiastically on religious matters, only to slip gradually to mundane subjects. The 'ripe' ones, on the other hand, take care to turn even an ordinary topic towards higher ideas. As a matter of fact, it is an educative pleasure to discuss even ordinary matters with them—for, their transparent character has an unmistakable dignity and attraction. Lastly, they are humble. Judicious as they are not to inject their own

religious views into others, they direct our attention away from themselves and towards God, the only and real Teacher.

Begin at home

Now the question is, Where to find such company? Thin on the ground as it is, and since it does not specifically mean association with monks, one solution is: try to build it at home—without imposing orthodox religious customs on the family members, but encouraging the essentials—truthfulness, purity of character, prayer, meditation, etc. This may be unsuccessful in many cases. The option is to somehow locate kindred minds in one's locality and form a group—a study-circle, for example, and get together as frequently as one's other responsibilities permit. One assurance we receive time and again from Sri Ramakrishna and other great Teachers as well is, if one is earnest, help does come.

After all, the purpose is to keep moving on the arduous inward path, the pilgrims cheering up each other through periodic company. As the saint Tulasidas has sung:

My child, place in one of the pans of a scale the joys of heaven, *mukti*, and all other achievements. Even together they equal not the joy of holy company.

—*Rāmacarit-mānas, Sundara-kāṇḍa, 4*

Holy company, properly nurtured, brings the vision of God and, as Sri Ramakrishna has said, 'A man cannot acquire the Knowledge of Brahman unless he completely rids himself of his attachment to the world. When the Divine Mother was born as the daughter of King Himalaya, She showed Her various forms to Her father. The king said, "I want to see Brahman." Thereupon the Divine Mother said: "Father, if that is your desire, then you must seek the company of holy men. You must go into solitude, away from the world, and now and then live in holy company"' (p. 250). □

Madhusudana Saraswati on the Bhagavad-Gita

SWAMI GAMBHIRANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

THE TRUE NATURE OF KARMA

Although the performance of duties be the same in the cases of both the enlightened and the unenlightened men, still, by way of showing the difference between them, He (the Lord), in accordance with the presence and absence of the idea of, agentship, explains in two verses the meaning of the verse, 'as the unenlightened people perform (their duties) with attachment...' (25):

प्रकृतेः क्रियमाणानि गुणैः कर्माणि सर्वशः ।
अहङ्कारविमूढात्मा कर्ताहमिति मन्यते ॥

*Prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni
gunaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ;
Ahaṅkāravimūḍhātmā
kartāhamiti manyate. (3.27)*

While actions are being done in every way by the guṇas, of Prakṛti (Nature), one whose mind is deluded by egoism thinks that 'I am the doer.'

Prakṛti, Nature, means Māyā, which is constituted by the guṇas—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*—, and has the nature of false ignorance, and is the power of the supreme Lord in accordance with the Śruti, 'One should know that Nature is surely Māyā, and the supreme Lord is the Ruler of Māyā to be sure'¹.

While *karmāṇi*, actions, mundane and Vedic; *kriyamāṇāni*, are being done;

sarvaśaḥ, in every way; *gunaiḥ*, by the *guṇas*—the transformations in the form of cause and effect; *prakṛteḥ*, of the Prakṛti (Nature); *ahaṅkāra-vimūḍha-ātmā*, one whose mind is deluded by egoism—one whose mind (*ātmā*) is incapable of distinguishing the true nature (of the Self) (*vimūḍha*) on account of identifying himself with the aggregate of body and organs—, one who thinks of the non-Self as the Self; *iti manyate*, thinks thus; '*kartā aham*, I am the doer, I perform those actions', by superimposing the idea of agentship (on the Self). In '*aham kartā*' (the word *kartā* is formed by adding) the suffix *trṇ* (after the verbal root *kr*). Hence according to the aphorism (of Pāṇini), '*na lokavyaniṣṭhā-khalarthatrṇām*' (2.3.69), the use of the Genetive case is ruled out. (Therefore the word *karmāṇi* is used in the Accusative case instead of in the Genetive.)

But the enlightened person does not think so. This is what He (the Lord) says:

तत्त्ववित्तु महाबाहो गुणकर्मविभागयोः ।
गुणा गुणेषु वर्तन्ते इति मत्वा न सज्जते ॥

*Tattvavittu mahābāho
guṇakarmavibhāgayoḥ;
Guṇā guṇeṣu vartante
iti matvā na sajjate. (3.28)*

But, O mighty-armed one, the one who is a knower of the true nature of the body, organs, mind, and their actions (on the one hand) and the Self (on the other) does not become

1. Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad, 4.10.

attached, thinking thus: 'The organs get engaged in the objects.'

Tattvavit is one who is a knower of the true nature (of things). By the use of the word *tu*, but, He speaks of his (*tattvavit*'s) distinction from the unenlightened person. True nature of what? Hence in answer He says, *guṇa-karma-vibhāgayoḥ*: The *guṇas* are the body, organs, and the mind, which are the basis of egoism; and *karmas* are their functions, which are the basis of the idea of 'mine'.

The phrase *guṇa-karma* appears in the collective singular number (being formed through the compound called *samāhāra-dvandva*). *Vibhāga* means that which stands differentiated by virtue of its being the revealer of all the mutable insentient things; i.e., the Self, which is of the nature of self-revealing Consciousness and is unattached. The *dvandva*-compound is formed between *guṇa-karma* and *vibhāga*.

That person who knows the true nature of *guṇa-karma* (body-organs-mind and their functions) and of the *vibhāga* (Self), of the illumined and the Illuminator, or the insentient and the Sentient, of the mutable and the Immutable; he, *iti matvā*, thinking thus; '*guṇāḥ*, the organs of the nature of instruments; being mutable, get engaged *guṇeṣu*, in the objects, but not so the Self, which is Immutable'; *na sajjate*, does not become attached; he does not have attachment, he does not entertain the idea of agentship like the unenlightened person.

By addressing him (Arjuna) as '*Mahābāho*, O mighty-armed one', He indicates, 'Being possessed of the signs of a great person as mentioned in the *Sāmudrika* (science of the marks on the body), you should not become non-discriminating like ordinary people.'

Or, (the meaning of *tattvavit guṇa-karma-vibhāgayoḥ* is) one who is a knower of the true nature of the (two) divisions of the *guṇas* (constituents of Prakṛti) and their functions (*karma*). In this case the utility of the word *vibhāga* (division) has to be thought over, since it would have sufficed to say *guṇa-karmaṇoḥ*, of the *guṇas* (constituents of Prakṛti) and *karmas* (their functions).

He (the Lord) concludes (in the following verse) what was said that, by making the performance of actions by the enlightened and the unenlightened men similar in this way, the enlightened person should not cause any disturbance in the beliefs of the unenlightened persons:

प्रकृतेर्गुणसंमूढाः सज्जन्ते गुणकर्मसु ।

तानकृत्स्नविदो मन्दान् कृत्स्नवित्रं विचालयेत् ॥

*Prakṛterguṇasammūḍāḥ
sajjante guṇakarmasu;
Tanakṛtsnavido mandān
kṛtsnavinna vicālayet. (3.29)*

The knower of the All should not disturb them who, wholly deluded by the guṇas of Prakṛti, become attached to the activities of the guṇas, who do not know the All, and who are evil-minded.

Kṛtsna-vit, the knower of the All, who has the knowledge of the Self in Its fullness; *na vicālayet*, should not disturb, i.e., should not himself dislodge from their faith in activities; *tān*, them, who are attached to actions; who, wholly deluded (*sammūḍhāḥ*) by the *guṇas*, by the constituents, *prakṛteḥ*, of Prakṛti, of the aforesaid Māyā, (i.e.) by its properties in the form of effects, (viz.) the transformations such as body etc.; who, thinking of those very ones as the Self on account of the non-manifestation of Its true nature, *sajjante*, become attached to the activities (*karma*) of those very *guṇas*, (i.e.) of

the body, organs and mind; who entertain a very firm idea of ownership as 'We perform actions for their results', *akṛtsna-vidah*, who do not know the All, who identify themselves with the non-Self; *mandān*, who are evil-minded, who being of impure minds have not acquired the competence for Knowledge.

But those who are not evil-minded, who are of pure minds, they, by themselves, lose faith (in actions) when discrimination dawns, when they become competent for Knowledge. This is the idea.

The words *kṛtsna* and *akṛtsna* have been explained by the writer of the *Vārtika* (in two verses) as meaning the Self and the not-Self, in accordance with the Śrutis:

Since from such sentences as, 'Existence alone'², the non-dual Entity is the All, therefore how can there be any possibility of Its opposite entity that is not the All?³

The not-All is said to be that on the perception of which even, that (very thing) as well as some other entity still

remains unperceived and, similarly, which even on remaining to be perceived, (the other entity) becomes perceived.⁴

Since the not-Self is possessed of parts and many properties, therefore the very same thing, for instance a pot, even when known as possessed of some property or some part, that very thing remains unknown as possessed of other properties or other parts. Also, other things which are different from it, for instance a cloth, remain unknown, to be sure. Thus even when those pots etc. remain unknown, cloth etc. may become known. Hence, since though something is known, still things other than that remain unknown, and since even when that thing remains unknown, other things become known, therefore that thing is called *akṛtsnah*, the not-All.

But the *kṛtsnah*, the All, is the non-dual Self only, because when That is known nothing else remains (to be known). This is the meaning of the two verses.

(to be continued)

2. *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad*, 6.2.1.

3. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka - Bhāṣya-Vārtika*, 1.4.655.

4. *Op. cit.*, 1.4.662.

A man came to the Prophet and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, direct me to an act which, if I do it, will cause Allah to love me and people to love me.' He said, 'Renounce the world and Allah will love you; renounce what people possess and people will love you.'

Islam, Forty Hadith of an-Nawawi, 31

On the Sea

P. SHNEIDRE

*(Based on a poem by Swami Vivekananda) **

Above, a blue sky proffered every puff
Of dark or light to her, both quick and dead,
Before an orange sun had had enough
And kissed them all goodbye, smearing them red.

Then, like a child, the wind came out to play—
Making up shapes and breaking them apart
As clouds you would have thought were far away
Started to sing from deep within your heart.

Though spun from bolts of cotton up above:
First they're a snake—until two lions roar,
Only to change to lovers locked in love,
Then all return to where they were before.

The world's loud music is just like this sea's,
A deep cacophony. It won't be long
Before I leave it to its destinies
And enter yours, O India, in song. □

* The author from California writes: '...I have been a student of Vedanta since 1969, when at the age of 18 I met my guru, Swami Prabhavananda. ...I have noticed with growing alarm that many people in the West, seeking spiritual nourishment, turn to the works of such poets as the German Rainer Rilke and the American Robert Bly. Such writers may be good poets, but their philosophical underpinnings are vague at best and demoniac at worst, and readers deserve better; in fact, they deserve Vivekananda. But, alas, most of Swamiji's original English poems would not appeal to readers not already interested in Vedanta, and his poetic masterpieces—i.e. the poems and songs written in his native tongue—have not heretofore been translated or published in a way that would appeal to lovers of literature in the West.

'The enclosed, then, represent my own attempts to repair this weak link in the chain of Vivekananda publishing. I enclose my versions of "And Let Shyama Dance There", "The Hymn of Creation", "On the Sea's Bosom" and "The Dance of Shiva".'

The Maya of Phenomenal Existence

S. BALASUNDARAM

Projecting a startling hypothetical situation, Sri Balasundaram of Tamil Nadu builds up a short and interesting discussion to derive the well-known conclusion: spiritual experience alone, and not some -ism, bestows peace and bliss. The author's 'A Note on Philosophy and Religion' was published in the PB in 1979.

Everything manifested is under the spell of Māyā, the inscrutable power of Brahman. Suppose mankind is told that the universe will come to an end next week. How will the believers and non-believers react? A majority of the people, both believers and non-believers, will become numb with shock and confused despair. Even among those who are endowed with a better understanding and are given to metaphysical speculations, there would be many who would not fully grasp the magnitude of the event and see it in the right perspective. For, the supposedly approaching event would not be local but cosmic—the end of the universe as a whole. It may therefore appear meaningless to speak of any perspective here.

For the non-believer, the end of the universe would not be the end of all existence, the end of everything. There will be the existence of the cosmic dust or whatever remains of the universe, since it cannot vanish completely leaving no remnant at all. For the believer, the absolute Being, which is the source and cause of the universe, is always existent. It is absolute, infinite and eternal, and is called Brahman. The universe has come out of Brahman; and when it comes to an end, it will be absorbed in Brahman. The non-believer may here say that there is nothing besides the universe; so the universe will either end permanently, or the creation-process will start all over again and there will be another universe in due course.

We may reject the non-believer's per-

manent-end-hypothesis since it leaves certain logical and philosophic questions unanswered. His second hypothesis, however, implies that the cosmic order is eternal, with alternating periods of activity and quiescence. Even so, the argument that the universe is the only reality, there is nothing else, is untenable. There is an undeniable evidence of a strange order, regularity and direction even in the chaotic universe. This points to a conscious and intelligent basis. Further, the cosmic process has evolved life and intelligent beings, who have the unique faculty of self-awareness and cognition. This fact alone is a sufficient proof that consciousness and intelligence of cosmic dimensions is involved in creation, disintegration and re-creation.

Therefore, the end of the universe will not be the end of everything. Neither will it be a final end. The process of creation will commence again. That will be the beginning of the next cycle; for, the cosmic order is cyclical and eternal.

This regular process, however, is, says the *Srīmad-Bhāgavatam*, not mechanical but sustained by the divine energy of the supreme Being.¹ About the beginning and

1. 'The present universe is but one of a series of worlds that are past and of worlds that are to be. The cosmic energy alternates between potentiality and expression.'—*Srīmad-Bhāgavatam, The Wisdom of God*, ed. Swami Prabhavananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1972), Book Three, ch. 11, p. 35.

end of all manifested things, Swami Vivekananda says:

...cities come and go, empires rise and fall, planets break into pieces and crumble into dust, blown about the atmosphere of other planets. Thus, it has been going on from time without beginning.²

Nothing is fixed and permanent in the universe. Things come into existence, have their being for some length of time, and then pass out of existence. The present joins the past, the future becomes the present and, in

So it is clear that, even the most rigorous philosophic contemplation will not lead us to the experience of total freedom from anxiety and bliss so long as we are at the psycho-physical level...

turn, goes into the past. The passage of time cannot be arrested or reversed. It is inexorable. Though for the absolute Being there is no division of time into past, present and future—there is only eternity—, man and the universe nonetheless are time-bound; they constitute a stream of ever-changing events.

So long as the stream lasts, good and evil, beauty and ugliness, pleasure and pain, and happiness and sorrow too persist. There is so much of beauty and good in the world that there are moments when one feels it is a pleasure just to be alive. Alas! there are also moments when one is overwhelmed with grief, misery, pain and wretchedness caused by the evil and ugliness in it, and wishes to escape.

Now, this world is going to end 'next

week'. Then all its good and evil and beauty and ugliness will cease to be; no more will there be pleasure, pain, happiness or sorrow. Will the prospect of such an event make people happy, or acutely unhappy and miserable, or leave them completely detached and unruffled? The majority, we have already said, will be terrified and grief-stricken. And there will be no one who will be happy, or who will remain totally detached and calm. Only the very few spiritually liberated souls, who are always in spiritual bliss, will remain unaffected.

None will be happy. Because even the most pessimistic philosophers and thinkers, whose conclusion is that life and the world are predominantly evil, and therefore death and non-existence are preferable to existence, never declared that it would be a happy event if the world went out of existence. But then, why should there be none except the few 'liberated souls' who will remain calm and detached? What about the highly philosophic, objective and impersonal people? No, even they cannot remain totally unaffected by the news of such an imminent event. Unlike ordinary mortals they perhaps would not be bewildered, terrified, seized with despair, or stricken with overwhelming grief. But they would nevertheless be seized with a sense of inadequacy and vague sadness.

Why should there be this sense of inadequacy and vague sadness? This is not due to the fact that life and the world and all that they bring forth will cease to be. Rather it is the result of the philosophic (intellectual) contemplation of life and the world. For, this makes the mind acutely conscious of the world's finiteness. The mind is thus unable to comprehend why there should be this world of cyclic motion and change. That mind then knows this as a great mystery which can never be fully and satisfactorily solved. This knowledge is at the bottom of the philosopher's vague sadness and *weltschmerz*. In the case of the philosophers

2. *What Religion Is, In the Words of Swami Vivekananda*, ed. Swami Vidyatmananda (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1972), ch. 2, pp. 50-1.

who are of the view that the world is the only reality, that sadness would be much more, for they would also be burdened with the feeling of utter pointlessness of the whole of existence.

So it is clear that, even the most rigorous philosophic contemplation will not lead us to the experience of total freedom from anxiety and bliss so long as we are at the psycho-physical level, or, in other words, in the realm of *Māyā*, also called *samsāra*. For, mind (thought, philosophy) as much as body (matter, cosmos) is in *Māyā*'s

realm and therefore subject to space, time and causation, to change and destruction. Both good and evil, pleasure and pain, beauty and ugliness, birth and death, and growth and decay are in *samsāra*. To be subject to these is to be in bondage. To get out of this bondage, we should live in the spirit, like the liberated few. This is why it is declared that the goal of human life is salvation, that is, liberation from spatio-temporal existence, and entry into the spiritual realm of eternal freedom and eternal peace. □

From Our Readers

Dear Sir,

Sub: Article on 'Swami Vivekananda and the Secular State' by Revered Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj in the Oct. '95 issue of *PB*.

On going through this bold and beautiful article I am greatly moved. Of course, Ranganathanandaji Maharaj is one of the most illustrious leaders and a pioneer in the Ramakrishna Order. Every talk from his lips and every article from his pen gives wonderful expression not only to the spiritual concepts of Ramakrishna and Vedanta philosophy, but also to the immediate and long term needs of our country and the whole world at large, seeking harmony and well-being of people.

What do we see in reality? Value-based life is collapsing, and is being replaced by dishonesty, corruption, immoral activities etc. with a completely selfish approach towards life. The question is, what is the remedy, which is so urgent? I think the Ramakrishna Mission, with branches all over the world, has got to play a very important and leading role to enlighten people and impress upon them the urgency of value-based living. As Swamiji dreamt and foresaw, things have to start from India itself. Possibly the Ramakrishna Mission can stress the ideal in the following areas besides their usual activities.

1. Persuade the political/social leaders and the intelligentsia to include study of Vedantic ideas from the primary school level through the entire academic career, irrespective of the disciplines and branches of education.
2. Valuable articles of this type published in *PB* and in all other leading journals/books by the Ramakrishna Mission should also be published in different languages in all the leading newspapers and relevant journals all over the country. I have every reason to believe that our newspapers and other people can be persuaded to agree to such a noble venture.
3. It is high time now to think of setting up the 'Vivekananda University', which should extensively deal with Vedantic philosophy in modern human life besides imparting conventional education in science and arts. The concept of such a University should not necessarily be confined to India only. It can be global so that people from all over the world, irrespective of race, religion and culture can study in this noble institution. Such a global approach may help in financing the proposed institution. Needless to say, the Ramakrishna Mission has to take the lead. I am sure such a move will get support from many right-thinking people in India and also outside. The task is no doubt difficult, but a beginning must be made immediately by the Ramakrishna Mission. There is no reason to feel hesitant about the ultimate success of such a venture.

The first and foremost thing in this venture shall be giving extensive publicity to the practical Vedanta Philosophy all over the world—through well-planned lectures, seminars and publication of valued articles in various media to build up a favourable environment.

Praying to Sri Ramakrishna to shower his blessings on all humanity for peace and harmony,

Sincerely yours,

B.B.Roy

Nadia, West Bengal

Swami Vivekananda, The Mystic

SWAMI TATHAGATANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

In the previous part, the author described some of the mystical experiences of Swami Vivekananda, concluding with an account of Swamiji's worship of the Divine Mother at Kanyakumari. From there he swam to a rock, 'the last stone of India', where he sat lost in meditation for three days. This part begins with Swamiji's thoughts at this time.

Swamiji's Great Heart

He gazed over the waters through a mist of tears. His heart went out to the Master and to the Mother in prayer. From this moment his life was consecrated to the service of India, but particularly to the service of her outcast Narayanas, her starving Narayanas, her millions of oppressed Narayanas. To him, in this hour, even the direct experience of Brahman in the Nirvikalpa Samadhi, and the bliss attending it, became subservient to the overwhelming desire to give himself utterly for the good of the Indian people.¹⁸

Expansion of heart is indicative of spiritual growth and therefore we find an all-encompassing heart among all spiritual luminaries. When we are able to transcend our self-centredness, cosmic, spiritual energy is released to make us compassionate. That Swamiji became a second Buddha in modern times can be noticed unmistakably in the following statement of Swami Turiyananda who saw Swamiji at Mount Abu in May, 1893.

I vividly remember some remarks made by Swamiji at that time. The exact words

and accents, and the deep pathos with which they were uttered, still ring in my ears. He said, 'Haribhai, I am still unable to understand anything of your so-called religion.' Then with an expression of deep sorrow on his countenance and intense emotion shaking his body, he placed his hand on his heart and added, 'But my heart has expanded very much, and I have learnt to feel. Believe me, I feel intensely indeed.' His voice was choked with feeling; he could say no more. For a time profound silence reigned, and tears rolled down his cheeks.' In telling of this incident Swami Turiyananda was also overcome. He sat silent for a while, his eyelids heavy with tears. With a deep sigh he said, 'Can you imagine what passed through my mind on hearing the Swami speak thus? "Are not these," I thought, "the very words and feelings of Buddha?" ...I could clearly perceive that the sufferings of humanity were pulsating in the heart of Swamiji; his heart was a huge cauldron in which the sufferings of mankind were being made into a healing balm.'¹⁹

Another touching incident took place later at Belur Math. Swami Vijnanananda—a brother disciple of Swamiji—once saw Swamiji at 2 a.m. pacing the veranda with

18. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 1, pp. 343-4. [Hereafter: C.W.]

19. *Ibid.*, p. 389.

an anguished mind. Being asked, Swamiji told: 'See, brother, I was sleeping well but suddenly I got a jerk and my sleep was gone. I have a premonition that somewhere many people are suffering due to a sudden disaster.' This explanation of Swamiji's sleeplessness, obviously did not satisfy the enquirer, who, of course, remained silent. The next day newspapers reported a great volcanic eruption causing the death of many

'...a profound mystical experience came to him, of which he never spoke beyond saying that Shiva Himself had appeared before him and that he (the Swami) had been granted the grace of Amarnath, the Lord of Immortality, namely, not to die until he himself should chose to do so.'

people near Fiji Islands exactly about the same time. Swami Vijnanananda was very much astonished to note that Swamiji's nervous system was more delicate than a seismograph. Swamiji's nervous system was found more responsive to human miseries.

Shiva

Swamiji went to Amarnath in Kashmir in November 1898, along with Nivedita. There 'a profound mystical experience came to him, of which he never spoke beyond saying that Shiva Himself had appeared before him and that he (the Swami) had been granted the grace of Amarnath, the Lord of Immortality, namely, not to die until he himself should chose to do so.'²⁰ Nivedita reported, '...so saturated had he (Swamiji) become with the Presence of the Great God that for days after he could speak of nothing else. Shiva was all in all: Shiva, the Eternal One, the Great Monk, rapt in meditation, aloof from the world.'²¹ At Belur Math in

November 1898, being requested by his disciple, Sarat Chandra Chakravarty, Swamiji said, 'Since visiting Amarnath, I feel as though Shiva were sitting on my head for twenty-four hours a day and will not come down.'²²

Under the Spell of the Mother

After Amarnath, Swamiji was intoxicated with the thought of the Divine Mother. This concentrated devotion to the Mother found expression in the worship of the four year old daughter of his Muslim boatman. He told his disciples that '...during these days...wherever he turned, he was conscious of the presence of the Mother, as if she were a person in the room.'²³ He felt that it was she, or his own Master, 'whose hands are clasped upon my own and who leads me as though I were a child.' In another context we get a little more elaboration of this experience. 'Again, in the last winter of his life, he told his disciple Swarupananda that for some months continuously, he had been conscious of two hands, holding his own in their grasp. Going on a pilgrimage, one would catch him telling his beads.'²⁴ 'And now, through his intensity of devotion, everything in the life of his companions became associated with the Mother, as it had been before with Shiva.'²⁵ It was not as if this was the first time Vivekananda had been held by the Mother. Reminiscing of his youth, Vivekananda described an early experience: 'I had great misfortunes at that time you know. My father died, and so on. And She [the Mother Kali] saw Her opportunity to make a slave of me. They were Her

21. *Ibid.*, p. 374.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 390.

23. *The Master As I Saw Him*, Sister Nivedita (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1972), p. 124.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 379.

25. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda, His Eastern & Western Disciples* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979), vol. 2, p. 379. [Hereafter: *Life*]

20. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 373.

very words—'To make a slave of you!'²⁶ 'At that time Kali took hold of his wrists. for the next seventeen years Swamiji always felt two hands holding his wrists; six months before he died they had stopped.'²⁷ The spell of Mother-devotion became so concentrated that he bitterly 'complained of the malady of thought, which would consume a man, leaving him no time for sleep or rest, and would often become insistent as a human voice.' In the second week of September (1898, still on pilgrimage in Kashmir), he had an experience similar to that at the Kali temple at Dakshineswar. With this dominant mood, he retired to a solitary place. The Swami's mind was wholly absorbed with the thought of Mother. He meditated deeply on Mother Kali and had a vision of Her. In the afflatus of that experience, he wrote the magnificent poem, 'Kali the Mother', in which he depicted the terrific as well as the compassionate aspect of Mother Kali. After finishing it 'he fell down on the ground absorbed in bhava-samadhi.'²⁸

On September 30th Swamiji went to Kshir-Bhavani, and stayed there until October 6th. He led a rigorously austere life and worshipped the Divine Mother with great fervour. He offered every day at Her shrine 'ksheer (thickened milk) made from one *maund* (40 kg.) of milk, rice, and almonds'.²⁹ Like any ordinary devotee he did his daily *japam* with his rosary and every morning worshipped a little girl as the Divine Virgin. After returning from Kshir

Bhavani, he told his disciples about one of his experiences: He was very sad while dwelling gloomily on the ruined and desecrated temple of the Mother. Thinking that no one perhaps had been there to protect the Shrine, he thought: 'How could the people have permitted such sacrilege without offering strenuous resistance! If I were here then, I would never have allowed such things. I would have laid down my life

And She [the Mother Kali] saw Her opportunity to make a slave of me. They were Her very words—'To make a slave of you!' At that time Kali took hold of his wrists. for the next seventeen years Swamiji always felt two hands holding his wrists; six months before he died they had stopped.

to protect the Mother.'³⁰ Then he heard the voice of the Mother saying, 'What, even if unbelievers should enter my temples, and defile My images! What is that to you? Do you protect Me? Or do I protect you?' After this Swamiji would say, so now 'there is no more patriotism. I am only a little child.'³¹ As he related to a disciple the above incident, the disciple asked, 'Sir, you used to say that Divine voices are the echo of our inner thoughts and feelings.' Swamiji gravely replied, 'Whether it be internal or external, if you actually hear with your ears such a disembodied voice, as I have done, can you deny it and call it false? Divine voices are actually heard, just as you and I are talking.'³² Reading from his poem, 'Kali the Mother', he said: 'It all came true, every word of it; and I have proved it, for I have hugged the Form of Death.'³³ Other visions of extraordinary nature were confided to

26. S.P. Basu, ed., *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, Parts I & II (Calcutta: Nababharat Publishers, 1982), I: p. 157.

27. *Ibid.*

28. S.N. Dhar, *A Comprehensive Biography of Swami Vivekananda* (Madras: Vivekananda Prakashan Kendra, 1975), p. 1109. [Hereafter: *Biography*]

29. *Life*, vol. 2, p. 381.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 382.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 382.

32. C.W., vol. 7, p. 131.

33. *Life*, vol. 2, p. 382.

one or two brother disciples.

Mystic Experiences in America

While in America, Swamiji on more than one occasion experienced the beatitude of Divine Consciousness. On 6th June 1895, along with a party of five, he went to Camp Percy, New Hampshire. He was greatly impressed by the quietitude of the beautiful place and expressed his desire to spend more time in meditation and the reading of the *Gita* in this solitary forest. As related by M.L. Burke in her *New Discoveries*:

One morning before breakfast Swamiji came out from his room with a Sanskrit *Gita* in his hand. I [Josephine MacLeod] was behind him. Seeing me he said, 'Joe, I am going to sit under that pine (pointing to a nearby pine) and read the *Bhagavad Gita*. See that the breakfast is sumptuous today.' Half an hour later I went over to the pine tree and saw Swamiji sitting there motionless. The *Gita* had fallen from his hand and the front of his robe was wet with tears. I went nearer and saw that his breathing had stopped altogether. I trembled in fear—Swamiji must be dead. I did not shout, but ran to Francis Legett and told him, 'Come quick, Swami Vivekananda has left us.' My sister ran to the spot with loud cries and my [future] brother-in-law also came with tears in his eyes. By now seven or eight minutes had passed. Swamiji was still in the same position. But my brother-in-law said, 'He is in a trance; I will shake him out of it.' I stopped him, shouting, 'Never do that!' I remembered that Swamiji had said once that when he would be in deep meditation one should not touch him. Another five minutes or so passed, then we saw the signs of breathing. His eyes had been half closed; now slowly they opened. And then Swamiji, as if soliloquizing, said, 'Who am I, where am I?' Thrice he

spoke like that, and then, wide awake, he saw us, was very much embarrassed, stood up, and said, 'I am sorry to have frightened you all. But I have this state of consciousness now and then. I shall not leave my body in your country. Betty, I am hungry, let's hurry....'

On the shore of Lake Michigan he had also entered in samadhi, but on that occasion it was Sri Ramakrishna who, appearing to him, drew him back 'to the Work for which he had come to the world.'³⁴

Sister Christine speaks of his deep meditative moods when he was at Thousand Island Park: 'There was nothing set or formed about these nights on the upper veranda. He sat in his large chair at the bed, near his door. Sometimes he went into a deep meditation. At such times we too meditated or sat in profound silence. Often it lasted for hours and one after the other [of us] slipped away.'³⁵

And here too, at Thousand Island Park, he experienced *nirvikalpa samādhi*.

Swamiji left Thousand Island Park on 7 August 1895. It was possibly on the same day that he had an experience of Nirvikalpa Samadhi, that is referred to in *The Life*. Possibly also this had happened as has been described by Mrs. Funke when she and Sister Christine were out for a walk with Swamiji as desired by him. The place where he possibly entered into Nirvikalpa Samadhi has now been tentatively identified. It was

34. M.L. Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in the West: New Discoveries* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1985), vol. 3, pp. 107–08.

35. Sister Christine, *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1961), p. 160.

beneath a big oak tree about half a mile from the cottage, and Swamiji may have sat on a big, flat boulder there. The incident is described by Mrs. Funke as follows, "This morning there was no class. He asked C. and me to take a walk, as he wished to be alone with us. (The others had been with him all summer, and he felt we should have a talk.) We went up a hill about half a mile away. All was woods and solitude. Finally, he selected a low-branched tree, and we sat under the low-spreading branches. Instead of the expected talk, he suddenly said, "Now we shall meditate. We shall be like Buddha under the Bo-tree." He seemed to turn to bronze, so still was he. Then a thundershower came up, and it poured. He never noticed it. I raised my umbrella and protected him as much as possible. Completely absorbed in his meditation, he was oblivious of everything. Soon we heard shouts in the distance. The others had come out after us with raincoats and umbrellas. Swamiji looked around regretfully, for we had to go, and said, "once more I am in Calcutta in the rains." So far as the Teacher himself was concerned, that was the crowning moment of his days at Thousand Island Park. The pupils felt blessed at the sight.³⁶

In the foregoing pages, we have given a profile of Swamiji's numerous mystical experiences. We do not pretend to gauge his spiritual eminence through such a humble study. A spiritual iceberg like him will remain ever unknown to us. Sri Ramakrishna who alone knew him once remarked, 'Let no one judge Naren. No one will be able to understand him fully.'³⁷ On another occasion Ramakrishna said, '...He loses normal consciousness in meditation for whole nights...he is a true knower of

Brahman. He sees light when he sits for meditation.' "...Narendra belongs to a very high plane—the realm of the Absolute."³⁸ Swamiji's normal mind was God-conscious. With little effort under the impulsion of intense desire, his mind drifted to *nirvikalpa samādhi*. It was truly difficult for him to keep his mind in the world.

The modern mind is rationalistic, and practical merely on the sense plane, while a true mystic is more inclined to live a meditative life. His spiritual insight makes him extremely useful, dynamic and unselfish. The mystic feels, enjoys and becomes illumined and gives us saving truths. He insists on the rectitude of life geared to spiritual enlightenment. He advocated a strenuous life devoted to the welfare of the people. He is a real genius exhibiting a high quality of life devoid of the human weaknesses. He represents the eternal ideal of human excellence. The whole world looks upon him as a lighthouse of hope and clear guidance. Faith in spiritual values is the very essence of the higher life of the spirit as envisioned by a mystic.

Modern man is groping for a living faith, a sound and rational philosophy; for him the shining example of an illumined mystic is the most persuasive testimony of God's existence. Swamiji's life will help him to find all he is looking for. In the words of Sister Nivedita, 'He was an apostle making an appeal to man...calling on the world to enter into the kingdom of God.'³⁹ A supreme mystic, who had 'seen God', Swamiji's blazing life, strength of character, and all-encompassing love for humanity confirms the presence of an all-pervading Truth in which we live, move and have our being.

(concluded)

36. *Biography*, I: p. 748.

37. *Life*, vol. 1, p. 87.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

39. *The Master As I Saw Him*, p. 14.

Basic Programme of Reform for India and the World

R. DAS

Does India really have a unique role to play in the world community of nations? Is her message for reform and regeneration of human civilization truly something apart and special in human experience? The author sincerely feels so, and points out that Ramakrishna and Vivekananda were the bearers of this important message and good news to the modern world.

What is the true import of the words 'reform' and 'revolution' which are so commonly used by the present day social and political idealists and reformers? Is there any Indian method of reform distinct from the Western method or experience? The purpose of this article is to attempt to discuss briefly this topic and point to a better method of reform aimed at bringing happiness and lasting peace to society. Perhaps no man of great influence ever thought on the subject of human welfare so deeply and passionately (yet dispassionately) as did Swami Vivekananda. He, therefore, is our main inspiration and his illuminating all-encompassing views are presented here.

I

Our concept of reform, from Europe at least, we associate with the activities of the Christian religious movement, the Reformation, which started in the 16th century. Reform then virtually meant the series of reactions on the part of the people against the strictures of orthodox Christian theology and its expression through the politics of absolute monarchies, which gathered on it all the dogmas, superstitions and religious abuses from medieval Europe. So much so that scientific truth seekers like Galileo and Kepler were hounded as heretics, and Bruno, the great astronomer, was burnt to death. It is said that Einstein once remarked

that he would have been burnt or hanged for his Theory of Relativity had he been born a few centuries earlier. Being fed up with this state of affairs, the people of Europe slowly shifted their loyalties to secular humanism, meaning love of man instead of love of God. Moreover, for the past four centuries there had been discernible and sometimes rapid progress of science and technology, which helped intellectuals of those days to lean towards rationality and discard dependence on the old ideas of religious faiths. Thus Europe emerged, reborn as it were, into the 18th and 19th centuries with a new hope and aspiration for social progress and prosperity, possibly on an unlimited scale, it was believed, through the application of rational scientific and humanistic effort.

Intellectuals, philosophers and poets began to rebel against theocratic and other tyrannies, and pointed out the need for applying reason and more democratic sensibility to humanitarian justice and reordering of society. John Milton (1608–1674), the great epic poet of England, emphasized that men being created in God's image had 'the liberty or right of free-born men to be governed as seems to them best.'¹ The great

1. B.N. Ganguli, *Gandhi's Social Philosophy* (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, Pvt. Ltd., 1973), p. 419.

philosopher and thinker Rousseau (1712–1778), who declared: 'Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains', came up with his theory of 'social contract'—the will of the people being substituted for God. The French thinker Voltaire (1694–1778), the 'sworn foe of all the tyrannies and injustices of his time', had an emphasis on man instead of God. The theory of Hedonism or Utilitarianism, which holds that 'we ought to aim at the greatest happiness of the greatest number of the people' was preached by Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806–1873). Then came Karl Marx (1818–1883), scientific materialist and doctrinaire of class struggle and socialistic system, who condemned religion unequivocally and preached 'social determinism' as final truth. No doubt he had in him the love for the poor and exploited class of humanity.

Thoughts and ideas of these philosophers and thinkers were so powerful and appealing to the minds of the people that they brought about major revolutions in Europe and America. The British Revolution (1688), the American Revolution (1775–1782), the French Revolution (1789), the Russian Revolution (1917) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations Assembly in 1948, are all testimony to this fact. But these were all mainly political revolutions undertaken by political-minded men inspired and armed by the new sense of power created by rapid advances of science and technology. Socio-economic changes came only as a by-product of these stirrings of modernism.

The humanistic spirit for creating an egalitarian society by the intellectual forces, however, failed to bring about the real good and peace in society. On the other hand, society turned awfully tyrannous at times with the rise of industrialism and science. Even the lofty ideals of the French

Revolution were quickly abandoned in the general excitement when the prospect of putting them into practice looked impossible. Absolute monarchism of Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821) was the outcome.²

The Russian Revolution of 1917 aimed at a drastic improvement of the socio-economic order throughout the whole world, with the special class of beneficiaries intended to be the proletariat. Strife, conflict and war was thought to be natural to the *laissez faire* or capitalist system. But when men consciously tried to hurry up the natural process of social evolution by adopting the method of instigating class warfare to overthrow the existing political and economic systems by force, the result was a terrible form of tyranny with bloodshed in the whole of Russia. Lenin and Stalin championed the cause of the Revolution, but finally saw no way to bring back stability except by imposing their dictatorships. Their own and the hopes of their people were belied, and the society was deprived of the joy of freedom. Human personalities became stunted and distorted.

We are aware that the counter-reaction to the Russian totalitarianism was nurtured in this modern period by Mikhail Gorbachov to restructure the Russian economy and democratize its political system by

2. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 5, p. 517; hereafter C.W.

It is interesting to note that Vivekananda observed: 'The whole French nation became mad in the name of liberty and equality—France became a Republic—they killed all the nobility whom they could get hold of...' (*ibid.*). We see that Europe became a war field in which the great Napoleon was defeated and banished to the lonely island of St. Helena where he died.

peaceful non-violent means. Though noble in its inspiration, his *perestroika* (if judged in the short term) had to fail. It could not produce immediate success or a turn-about of existing conditions. The movement, at present continuing, to restore full private property rights for the emergence of an economically free citizenry, has yet to prove its efficacy. The question arises: why have such reform movements in the West over the last few hundred years not produced lasting welfare and peace for mankind?

Swami Vivekananda once remarked that 'wherever there have been fanatical reforms the only result has been that they have defeated their own ends.'³ His remark is highly applicable if by fanatical is meant 'of narrow vision'. The ideals for Western revolutions were drawn from the theories of intellectuals who remained themselves entangled in the maya of ubiquitous struggle for existence and who therefore had not the spiritual power or authority to speak for the spiritual needs of the people. In other words their idealism was materialistic. The sharp intellect and clear reasoning which these thinkers possessed was, after all, the worldly vision. Unable even to grasp the whole area of problems faced by the world, much less able to offer true solutions to them, they had nothing at all in common with the spiritually illumined leader of deep and broad consciousness attuned to the spiritual oneness of mankind, 'seeing himself in the universe, and the universe in

himself' (Gita, 6.29), thus developing infinite love and compassion for humanity.

Buddhas, Christs, and Ramakrishnas have alone been the real doers of good to humanity and world movers. The general reform movements in Western societies and politics have not usually been guided by such deeply illumined souls.

Swami Vivekananda reiterated that Europe and all the Western countries inherited their culture and civilization from ancient Greece. 'The voice of Europe is the voice of ancient Greece,' he said about a century ago. Will Durant, the eminent historian too said: 'Excepting machinery, there is hardly anything secular in our culture that does not come from Greece.'⁴ The characteristic of Greek culture was striving for perfection, but it was in externals only. Hence literature, science, health, politics, warfare and other branches of objective knowledge manifested external perfections emphasizing only material prosperity and growth. The whole national energy of the people of Greece was directed 'outward', as it were. They neglected to cultivate the inner dimension or spiritual side of man. The Western countries inheriting these characteristics of Greek culture no doubt excelled in politics, trade, industry, social life, politico-socio-economic institutions, and other objective knowledge, but they hardly regarded study of the spiritual nature of man and failed to sustain for long their own noble ideas and ideals in practice. Lowering the ideal, it was impossible for them to raise the spiritual consciousness of humanity.

Latent materialistic tendencies or *samskāras* were predominant in their individual characters as well as in their

3. C.W., vol. 3, p. 214.

'When Hegel (1770-1831) the famous German philosopher saw Napoleon on horseback at the headquarters of his army, he said, "I saw the world soul riding." The thinkers betray their function when they descend to the market place to serve the passions of race, class or nation.' S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 2nd edition), p. 358.

4. Quoted in Swami Ranganathananda: *Eternal Values for a Changing Society* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1986), vol. 4, p. 10.

national life. Therefore it was not so easy to give up these *samskaras*. Hence their ideas and thought on reform, however well intentioned and humanistic, were manipulated by their political leaders' dominant materialistic philosophy of life to acquire power, possessions and money.⁵ The result after decades and even centuries of reforms and progress in the West is the residue of overwhelming tensions, restlessness, strifes, violence, and other such psychological malaise. Swami Vivekananda noted [pointing the way for India]: 'We have to find our way between the Scylla of old superstitious orthodoxy and the Charybdis of materialism—of Europeanism, of soullessness, of the so-called reform—which has penetrated to the foundation of Western progress.'⁶

II

India's reform movements have all along been spiritually oriented, from the beginning of her Vedic civilization, because she chose religion, spiritual religion, as a way of life and spiritual liberation as life's goal. Though there have been ups and downs in her history, and variances in her ability to hold the ideal aloft for all to rally under, overall India's culture has been characterised by the spiritual orientation which has been the foundation, backbone, and the

life centre of this blessed land. 'Our sacred Motherland,' declared Swami Vivekananda,

is a land of religion and philosophy—the birth place of spiritual giants—the land of renunciation, where and where alone, from the most ancient to the most modern times, there has been the highest ideal of life open to man.... This is the motherland of philosophy, of spirituality, and of ethics, of sweetness, gentleness, and love.⁷

Our ancient civilization developed a holistic view of life, accepted the principle of unity in diversity and harmony of all religious paths, and set the spiritual ideal of realization of the divine self within. In Vedic times a flame used to be the holy symbol of God, and this small sacrificial fire used to burn in every home signifying self-sacrifice for the sake of others. This core of religious idealism of the Vedic age became expressed in science, art, literature, music, dance, and all other branches of knowledge through the ages.

As with the decline of civilizations in other parts of the world, India's downfall meant departure from the path of these ideals, and falling prey to materialistic values, for instant gratification of desires and securing material rewards. In India downfall came with the emergence of overbearing priest-craft when the so-called upper classes and upper castes began to garner all the powers and enjoyments of the world to themselves at the expense of the poor, oppressed and exploited masses. Yet, the loss of political power by invasions, social retrogression, and cultural decadence were mere ancillary effects. Ancient India, as in her glorious days, in her bad days too considered political power and commercial

5. We are reminded of Sri Krishna's description of the *asuric* (demoniac) nature in the *Bhagavad-Gita* (XVI, 7–8). In this connection Swamiji's observation about the characteristics of the East and the West is significant. He writes: 'Now to understand the East and the West, we cannot do better than interpret the Hindus as the sons of the Devas and the Westerners as the sons of the Asuras.' (C.W., vol. 5, p. 471). Swamiji explains that the Asuras are superior to the Devas in many respects. The former are more manly and powerful, only they are out and out materialists in their outlook of life.

6. C.W., vol. 3, p. 172.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 137, 147.

prosperity as subordinate to the spiritual ideal of life. And for this reason alone India's ideal and life were never snuffed out. Following every decline, civilization rose again.

Whenever such degeneration took place in the national life, perfected spiritual souls appeared to take the lead in restoring the country to the glorious path of spiritual balance and liberation from the abyss of materialism and darkness. These great souls' thoughts and activities being inspired by their spiritual realizations, they sang the notes of supreme values of life which appealed to the hearts of the people, penetrated their psyche and imperceptibly helped them move on to a higher plane of consciousness.

So, unlike the predominate experience in the West, the Indian approach to reform has always been to raise human consciousness to a higher level and to emphasize development of spiritual culture, manifesting the innate divinity in man. Social upliftment and sometimes political change did come as a matter of course, but these were never the focus of India's spiritual reformers. The Reform Movement of Sri Chaitanya, for example, was based entirely on preaching of the religion of Love to transform the consciousness of people. Chaitanya saw no distinction between Brahmin and Sudra, saints and sinners, men and women. His movement brought about the complete reform of the caste system and gave scope for every one from the highest to the lowest to raise themselves. His ecstatic love of God ruled the hearts of the people, and even now does so.

Indian reforms in essence and in spirit, were thus reconstructive and restorative. They aimed at rejuvenating the cultural and spiritual life to the highest glory. It was always a spiritual elevation that followed

when society had fallen to a low ebb. It was always a re-awakening of the people when they had forgotten their life-giving spiritual ideals and cultural heritage. Reform and uplift always came by adding real strength to the character of the national life weakened by decline of values.

Looking into Indian history one finds that Mahavira, Buddha, Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya, Guru Nanak, Sri Chaitanya, Kabir and other spiritual giants were leaders of reform movements in our country.

These were all spiritual dynamos first, but with a difference; they were without the destructive taint of the fanatic. They stood for removal of social evils and simultaneously for upliftment of society to a superior cultural level. They all had deep feeling for the masses of poor but gentle people and were possessed of an astonishingly pacifying love for humanity. Never was there noise or fuss of publicity and propaganda. Their work was carried on mostly in silence.

III

Swami Vivekananda himself was never destructive. He never stood for taking-away or tearing-down, but always for 'adding to' existing traditions, institution, and motivation for reforms. He would keep the spirit and ideal fully intact when meeting the challenge of changing times. Yet he gave a new orientation to traditional reform movements of India to meet the challenge of modern times, the advance of science and material technology that has shrunk our world into a smaller planet. If reform means changes, then Swami Vivekananda wanted to go down to the bottom of the thing, to the very root of the matter. 'Root and branch reform', he termed it. To the reformers he would point out to them that he was a greater reformer than any one

of them.⁸ He envisaged bringing about a thorough change in the texture of thought in the individual, and consequently in society. His 'treatment' meant purifying the life blood because he found that the poison of materialism had entered deep into the vitals of the nation.

The basis of Vivekananda's reforming spirit is Vedanta which preaches realization of human unity, the unity of life and all existence, and the divinity of the soul. It meant making Vedanta practical in actual work so that man could learn to love and serve all living creatures, including humanity itself, with the infinite love of God. Who could practise such love? Only one who would first develop his own character: with strength, self-confidence, freedom, and the capacity for mutual and equal love for all. His special object was to bring to individuals the consciousness that they must first raise themselves and then help to rejuvenate and invigorate the downtrodden masses who had for centuries been oppressed even to the point of losing their own individualities as human beings. Swami Vivekananda's dream was to usher in a new civilization, 'where the highest truths become practical', where 'every man will be the worshipper, and the Reality in every man will be the object of worship.' 'Forget not that thy social order is but the reflex of the Infinite Universal Motherhood,' he said.⁹

His reform programme aims at growth of man, not destruction even in the least measure. He declared: 'I do not believe in reform [so-called]; I believe in growth.'¹⁰ This growth is a total and comprehensive growth in all phases of life, to be achieved through a new type of education which he

called 'man-making and character-building education'. The foundation on which the edifice of the educational system will be built is the twin ideal of Renunciation and Service. Said Swami Vivekananda:

The ideal of all education, all training, should be this man-making. But, instead of that, we are always trying to polish up the outside. What use in polishing up the outside when there is no inside? The end and aim of all training is to make man grow.¹¹

In India, he rejected outright the existing system of education based on the imported western model, as it is unsuitable for fostering the growth he wanted. We should remember that growth of a society is determined by individual growth, because it is the individuals who constitute a society, and form the base to strengthen all its institutions and organization. The unit of national development Vivekananda did not emphasize as being a village panchayat, nor a political party, nor even an administrative machinery. But his belief was that the individual would be the unit of this growth, and this should be squarely recognized by everyone.

Swamiji held up the *lokasaṅgraha* ideal of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* for this growth.¹² This word, meaning 'the good of society', signifies that natural leaders of men, those with strong character, should set an example to society by their unselfish actions so that others with inferior qualities may be inspired by them and take up the right path. So whenever an individual grows to perfection, or even attempts to lead a better life he does not conceal himself, but guides others to grow as well. Thus a real reforming spirit is born in the country. This is what Swamiji

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 216, 213.

9. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 85, 358; vol. 4, p. 480.

10. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 213.

11. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 15.

12. *The Gita*, III, 20, 25.

meant by his aphorism: '*Be and make*',¹³ and this is the keynote of his reform movement. He called to the Nation therefore:

Men, men, these are wanted: everything else will be ready, but strong, vigorous, believing young men, sincere to the backbone, are wanted. A hundred such and the world becomes revolutionized.¹⁴

Vivekananda's idea of this radical reform was never meant to be confined to India alone. He wanted to make it a universal movement for change. He had a great respect for the nationality of each country, which essentially is the expression of its genius and ideals; yet he stood for humankind as a whole: 'I know my mission in life,' he wrote, 'and no chauvinism about me; I belong as much to India as to the world.... Truth is my God, the universe my country.'¹⁵

IV

After a century when we look to the West, India, and the world, we see a dismal picture. Where is that root and branch reform? Has it been started anywhere? In the West we find that politics coupled with the mass media, with its dominating and exploitative power, is creating waves of vile materialism threatening to engulf, as it were, the whole world. Result: Restlessness at the heart, tension, violence, terrorism, conflicts, and occasional wars. India, the land of the *r̥sis* (sages) is perhaps the worst sufferer.

To a person of superficial mind these painful expressions of the modern age are disheartening, or at least frustrating. But if we take an introspective and thoughtful look these are only the first manifestations

of a revolutionary change to cover the world. After the storm comes the return of the calm and peaceful atmosphere. Something is decaying that something new may be born.

Once Swami Vivekananda told a brother-disciple, sometime in 1891: 'Sarada (premonastic name of Swami Trigunatitananda), I am beginning to understand to some extent now, what the Master (Sri Ramakrishna) said of me. Really, there is so much power in me I feel as though I could revolutionize the world.'¹⁶

What did the Master say of him? Sri Ramakrishna, towards the end of his life in 1886 at Cossipore, wrote on a piece of paper a prophetic statement: 'Naren will teach others when he will make loud calls in India and abroad.'¹⁷ A few days before his passing, Sri Ramakrishna transmitted to him [Naren or Vivekananda] his spiritual wealth and blessed him saying, 'By the force of the power transmitted by me great things will be done by you.'¹⁸ So Swamiji feelingly said later, 'While I am on earth, Sri Ramakrishna is working through me.'¹⁹ This divine power manifested Itself in the Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893 and was obviously with him throughout his stay in America and Europe. We believe that it will not stop working till the whole world is reconstructed on a solid spiritual foundation.

To bring about this great change,

13. C.W., vol. 4, p. 351.

14. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 223-4.

15. *Ibid.*, vol. 5, pp. 95, 92.

16. S.N. Dhar, *A Comprehensive Biography of Swami Vivekananda* (Madras: Kendriya Prakashan, 1975), p. 328.

17. Original Bengali: '*Naren shikke debe jekhona ghare bahire hank debe.*'

18. Eastern & Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1960), p. 148.

19. C.W., vol. 6, p. 330.

Swamiji had to encounter innumerable obstacles and difficulties. He found that the western psyche was tainted with certain worn out samskaras of the early Judeo-Christian tradition which should have become attenuated over the centuries. And indeed they have, but their residue lingers: First is the proselytizing tendency²⁰ which, when exported beyond their own boundaries as 'foreign policy', has in the past expressed itself as vile racialism and nationalism. Their attitude as cultural ambassadors to poor nations has been to herd all people under their influence into the net of narrow and dogmatic ideologies.

Second, Semitic religions' concept of original sin—that man is born a sinner, has led them to believe that aggressive instincts and primitive urges in man are innate in human nature and therefore he needs satisfaction of these urges by external means of sense enjoyments to get fulfilment of life. Freud's theory of 'libido', 'primary hostility', and 'guilt conscience' of human beings, and Darwin's theory of 'survival of the fittest' were the outcome of these deep-rooted samskaras or tendencies of their propounders. Third, these concepts support the pleasure principle of life which encourages acquiring power, possession, and profit as life's objective.

Swamiji's outpouring of spirituality to the western mind did much to counteract and neutralize these psychological problems. He was however happy to find many good qualities and traits in the individual American's character in his time, which smoothed his mission. Americans he found were generous, open-minded, active and self-reliant, and above all they had a great love of freedom. So once he said, 'I love

the Yankees (Americans).'²¹ Praising also the English people he said, 'The English do not talk much but they work silently. Every enterprise in the country takes some time to get started. But once John Bull sets his hand to a thing he will never let go, ... they are a nation of heroes, they are true kshatriyas (defenders of truth).'²² He observed that both in America and in Europe there were spiritually sensitive holy persons who were mainly rationalists and truth-seekers.

Swamiji's impact in the West was profound, as is evident from the writings and utterances of many intellectuals and world-thinkers of this century, like Max Muller, Paul Deussen, William James, Tolstoy, Rolland, Basham, Toynbee, Chelishev, Sorokin, Fritzof Capra, Aldous Huxley, Christopher Isherwood, and many others. Then there are a growing number of devotees and supporters of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement who are greatly appreciative of Indian philosophy and spirituality. The religious climate in the West is already under-going a fast change.

India, Swami Vivekananda's own beloved motherland, once famous for her great civilization and culture was, as if, lying asleep, being seriously afflicted with poverty, ignorance, inferiority complex, and caste, and riddled with superstition. To her also Swamiji poured out spirituality, perhaps with greater vigour and intensity, to awaken her from the torpor of ages with the clarion call: 'Arise! Awake!...stop not till the Goal is reached.' He saw with his spiritual insight 'the sleeping Leviathan' was rising to her feet with a brilliant future.

20. Perhaps the Syrian Christians in India are exceptions, who show no proselytizing tendency.

21. Swami Gambhirananda, *Yuganayak Vivekananda* (Bengali) (Calcutta: Udbodhan, first edition), p. 276.

22. Swami Nikhilananda, *Vivekananda, A Biography* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1971), pp. 181, 206.

'Bold has been my message to the people of the West, bolder is my message to you, my beloved countrymen!'²³ he cried with intensity of feeling. His impact in India was tremendous. After his passing away we witnessed a great struggle in India for social uplift and political freedom, culminating in the attainment of National Independence. Of course, recently there has come a lull and perhaps a moral morass also in the Indian mind. This is mostly due to the waves of westernization which are pounding the shores of our country—a retro-gréssion indeed! But this will pass away slowly, giving rise to revival of spiritual strength and vigour. We cannot neglect and ignore the truth, as Swamiji emphasized, 'our life blood is spirituality.'²⁴

23. C.W., vol. 4, p. 312.

24. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 288.

Mind conditioned to a particular way of life continues to remain in that state and begins to change only when an external force acts upon it. Swamiji's Divine Force is this heaven-sent agency which is bound to bring about a revolutionary change.

Vivekananda entrusted to modern Indian youth, born to spiritual traditions, the great task of initiating this reform movement in India with vigour and enthusiasm, spreading it ultimately over the whole world. Did he not say that India was the focus of attention of the whole world? So he made a prophetic assertion: 'This time the Centre is India.'²⁵ □

25. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 402. The English translation of the original Bengali: 'Ebar kendra bharat varsa.' *Swamiji's Bani O Rachana* (Bengali), vol. 6, p. 31.

The magnetic needle always points to the North, and hence it is that the sailing vessel does not lose her direction. So long as the heart of man is directed towards God, he cannot be lost in the ocean of worldliness.

—*Sri Ramakrishna*

O my ignorant mind, ever call thou on Him, by Whose grace all thy works are accomplished; yea, keep His presence ever before thy mind, by Whose grace thou findeth the truth; attune thyself to Him.

—*Guru Nanak*

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

—*Jesus Christ*

Verily nothing is more purifying than the holy name of God.

—*Srimad Bhagavatam*, 6.1

In the Tribal Heartland*

S.L. GOSAL

The Bangkok-based IFAD, has together with the ITDA, been working in remote villages of Andhra Pradesh, bringing about changes in the lifestyles of the tribals there. Setting up of cooperatives and credit societies to help them sell their produce and encourage income-generating activities formed part of the project. Sri Ghosal, who visited the tribal heartland, writes about his experiences.

Dusk had set in when we reached the forest bungalow at Seethampeta, beyond Srikakulam, our first destination. It was a fortnight-long mission through four tribal districts of Andhra Pradesh—Srikakulam, Vijayanagaram, Visakhapatnam and Rajahmundry.

Early morning field-visits to the tribal villages around Seethampeta proved exhilarating. The meandering road, littered with dry leaves, was frequently darkened by the shadows of huge tamarind trees. The air was heavy with the scent of flowering mahua trees. Tiny bells tied to the necks of buffaloes jingled in unison, breaking the valley's unreal silence.

We settled for a cup of tea at Jalubuguda—where a check dam was coming up to rid the village of a veritable poverty trap. 'We should be able to take to a second crop soon', said Chinna Anna, an elderly farmer optimistically. Not far away, at Pongalamguda, we came across a tank under construction at an inconceivable height.

Srikakulam district conjures up an image of 'Naxal' extremism amid tribal primitivism and unrelieved poverty. There were signs of change, however. Naxalism took its roots in Andhra Pradesh in the mid-

Sixties with Srikakulam district as the focal point. Ever since, with an occasional lull, the extremists have been hitting the headlines claiming responsibility for murders, blasts and kidnappings. There are eight *dalamis* (groups) operating in the area, the most active faction being the Peoples War Group, outlawed since May 1992. The spectre of extremism that haunts the tribal belts today has been, to an extent, encouraged by impoverishment caused by an alien socio-economic culture bringing with it alien values and temperaments.

In the naxalite areas, which we either skirted or stepped into unwittingly, the men do not drink, justice is instant—extremists settle wage issues, distribute the excess land holdings of the rural rich and stop exploitation by the money-lenders and the rich. What the Government should be doing by removing social inequality, corruption and erosion of moral values, the naxals were doing by coercive and violent methods, commanding respect among tribals bordering on adulation. This put the police and the extremists on a collision course and the worst sufferers were the tribals.

It is not easy to change the tribal heartland where the extremists are seen as protectors enjoying the tacit support of the locals. Yet, we came across a dedicated set of people who took upon themselves the job of ushering in a new era, hazards

* Courtesy *The Hindu*, Madras.



Bringing cheer all around... a tribal dance in Devoduvalsa village near Paderu

notwithstanding. They are committed to help the tribals join the mainstream. Many innovative programmes (the concept of a grain bank for food security, for example) they initiated are of importance.

Andhra Pradesh is the only State where young IAS officers have been posted in far-flung places as project officers of the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) operating in the State since 1975 and their performance has been altogether praiseworthy.

From May 15, 1991, the Bangkok-based International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has been involved in some selected watersheds of ITDA. The

IFAD strategy focuses on household food security within the context of traditional environment and value system—feeding the tribals with limited resources at their command—and on identifying the poorest and the most disadvantaged for assistance. Agricultural primitivism in tribal areas is a myth that the project is determined to explode through simple low-cost measures which will help the tribal farmers take to improved farming. The project has been built on the existing ITDA procedures of village meetings, the use of community selected village liaison workers and agricultural consultants—fresh graduates and post-graduates in agriculture in their early twenties—to assist in project implementation.



In the service of the poor... a shanty near Panderu organized by the Girijan Cooperative Corporation to help the farmers sell their produce

Out of the 32 watersheds in the four contiguous ITDAs (Seethampeta, Parvatipuram, Rampachodavaram and Paderu), IFAD has selected 16, mostly covered under podu cultivation (68 per cent families) with the most disadvantaged group concentrated there. Following our visits, it stands out that what matters most at the moment is not agricultural production or productivity, but food security.

The IFAD target group comprises all the 63,371 families in 2,077 villages in the 16 selected watersheds, the total number of beneficiaries being 2,88,774. Quite a formidable task. An answer to the problem was sought—Ms. Anuradha, Project Officer, Seethampeta, explained—through cent per cent tribal recruitment at the grass-root level as village liaison workers by lowering the entry qualification. They were then exposed to a series of training programmes. To elaborate her point she took us to the Horticultural-Nursery-cum-Training Centre (HNTC) at Panukuvalasa where some 16 young tribal boys were undergoing

skill practice in intercropping banana with pineapple.

The nearby sloping hill sides, subjected to 'Podu' provided a panorama of pineapple being intercropped with banana. Yet another village Kusumi, provided an excellent view of pineapple intercropped with ginger under the shade of luxuriant cashew. The less steep slopes and the undulating valley floors down below were subjected to soil conservation works at the project cost, employing the beneficiaries themselves as labour. It was a delight to see almost the entire region around the HNTC systematically brought under either horticultural crops or contour-bunded and terraced fields, according to the sloping grade, where settled cultivation was progressively replacing 'Podu'.

Parvatipuram, our next destination in the adjoining Vijayanagaram district, offered a series of success stories. Negotiating a picturesque ghat through miles of forested roads, we arrived at the project

headquarters and thence fanned out to Thotapalli, Rastakuntabai and Nandrakona.

At a meeting of an informal thrift society in a village off Nandrakona, the women's eagerness to take to backyard gardening was surprising. Mr. Radha Krishnan, project agricultural officer had no hesitation in giving them seeds and all inputs needed. Andalu Nagulu, with a baby on her arm, was busy buying some plants when we visited the wayside nursery later. Taking all the four projects together, we learnt that IFAD planned to finance the establishment of 410 informal thrift and credit societies with an average of 25 members each. The project would make a matching contribution equal to the total savings mobilised during the first year. These societies apart, IFAD had also agreed to finance the formation of 196 groups of women to process Minor Forest Produce (MFP)—or to engage in other income generating activities leading to the formation of pre-cooperatives.

Parvathipuram to Rampachodavaram of East Godhavari district was a day-long drive, skirting almost entire coastal Andhra Pradesh. A wayside shanty near Guma Laxmi Puram broke the monotony of our travel. We spent hours watching the event. It was on the outskirts of a village, starting from a huge tamarind tree extending up to the banks of a rivulet, a distance of about 500 yards. By midday, it assumed a lively appearance with some thousand people, mostly tribals, charging the atmosphere with mirth.

There were signs of gaiety and festivity all around. Drums rolled, cymbals clashed and flutes struck a note as boys and girls gyrated and swayed in a frenzied tempo. Their eyes sparkled and their ebony-coloured bodies glistened in the sun. Finally the dance came to a halt. They all knew that

a little space in the shanty was all their world. But that too was short lived.

As the hours advanced, we observed men arriving with poles balanced on their shoulders with baskets of livestock or pots filled with forest produce, women carrying their burdens—mostly *adda* leaves—on their heads. Grey piles of salt, brown stacks of tamarind, wizened medicinal bark spread out on mats, cheap ornaments, small implements and utensils, earthen and brassware all added to the gaiety and colour.

Hitherto, the shanty deceptively conveyed the impression of a bustling money economy. But the impression was more apparent than real, thanks to the presence of shrewd indigenous traders from the plains who would not miss an opportunity to exploit tribal innocence and ignorance. Things have changed—the Girijan Cooperative Corporation (GCC) has come in a big way making outright purchase of minor forest produce in every shanty, the indigenous traders being prohibited to purchase them. It was heartening to see a couple of GCC camps in this shanty, one for tamarind and the other for *adda* leaves, the arrival of both being quite brisk.

But as we watched the average farmer selling his produce to GCC, or an occasional chicken or piglet to an indigenous trader, it was obvious he would not return to his village with enough cash. He would be left with little to carry back after exchanging his sale-proceeds for other necessities.

We left the shanty for our next destination, Rampachodavaram, in East Godhavari district. The official accompanying us explained the seriousness of problems created by the non-tribal traders who, as moneylenders, would be on the look out to extend a loan at exorbitant rates of interest. Falling prey to these sharks, knowingly or

unwittingly, could be unfortunate but it did stand between starvation and survival, he observed. No wonder, a tribal visualised him as his saviour as he always emerged out of the blue in a difficult situation. GCC's role to counter all this proved formidable in the beginning but its objectives were broad-based and operations well-planned under a clear-cut policy of the Government.

GCC started floating consumption loans, followed by short, medium and long term crop production loans to rid the tribals of moneylenders' trap. Progressively, the concept of grain banks and thrift and credit societies established a system of informal credit, owned and managed by the tribals themselves. We had an excellent exposure to this concept next morning at Palem, off Rampachodavaram.

GCCs have set up fair price shops for the tribals in the far-flung villages and have built Domestic Requirements (DR) depots at strategic points near the shanties making outright purchase of agricultural and horticultural produce from the tribals. For the first time, in 1990-91, the GCC started giving consumption loans in a big way to landless tribals who were mainly dependent on the collection of minor forest produce. Under this programme, a sum of Rs. 27 lakhs was disbursed to 6,056 beneficiaries during 1990-91 and another Rs. 98 lakhs to 15,445 beneficiaries during 1991-92.

In Palem, we walked past a row of thatched houses reaching a grain bank, the sole brick-built structure innocuously mingled with the mud-huts. The manager, a young tribal dressed in a loin cloth, explained in Telugu the simple procedure. For food security, a tribal farmer would deposit a portion of his grain at the time of harvest. An equal quantity would be credited to his account at the project's cost and stored. The depositor would be entitled

to withdraw during lean season or emergency.

Each grain bank has an average of 30 members with an average project contribution of around 2 tonnes of grains, matched by an equivalent contribution from the members. The village finances construction of a suitable building for the storage of the grain. Dr. Prem Chand boasted of 90 such grain banks in his project area—the ones in the difficult and less motivated areas being given special incentive by way of doubling the project's share of grain contribution to the bank, he said. Taking all the four projects together IFAD envisaged to finance 230 grain banks. The concept of grain bank was conceived by one of his predecessors, V.M. Manohar Prasad, he added.

We then proceeded to Pandrimamidikota, another one hour drive from Palem on an apology of a 20 km road. Cropping pattern around appeared to have a mixed-crop orientation with millets, sorghum and pulses dominating and some staggering of less important crops like gingelly to ensure food supply over a long period.

Far away from the din and bustle of modern life, surrounded by valleys and cliffs, clothed in emerald green bush jungles, the panorama of Panderu, our last destination, presented a captivating spectacle. At an altitude of above 1000 metres the valley throbs with the colourful life of tribals. Begatas, Muka Doras, Malis, Kotias, Konda Doras, Porjas, Valmikis are the groups of tribals who inhabit here. We found their villages built on the ridges and hilltops surrounded by luxuriant flora.

Early morning, after visiting some randomly selected villages around Panderu, where the project activities under soil and water conservation and small-scale irrigation works were on, Narasingh Rao, the

Project Officer, took us to a point where the extremists had struck a police jeep with a land mine. The road had caved in, the boulders still strewn over a wide area.

We drove again for an hour towards Arku and finally came to a picturesque valley, Devoduvalsa. Walking down a leeway we reached the village. The tribals had taken to extensive vegetable cultivation on either side of a streamlet that ran parallel to our road for about half an hour. We drove for another hour through meandering ghats and finally reached Arku in the evening.

We then visited a village about 40 km away from Arku town where, in collaboration with a voluntary organization, a demonstration of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) exercise was arranged to bring out the tribal farmers' traditional technologies which the project wanted to integrate with exogenous ones, emanating from the regional research centre at Chintapally, to ensure total food security of tribal household. The exercise brought into focus the fact that the tribals knew about ecology, about forests and environment.

Tribal farmers, Cheburulu Satyam and Penta Gangulu, responding to questions said that the tree was their house and the forest their wealth. 'Every part of the forest is sacred to us—every streamlet down the hills, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of our people,' they added.

Traditionally, the entire tribal popula-

tion was directly or indirectly associated with the eco system. Forests provided them with everything—food, shelter, fodder, building material, fuel and recreation. But could this deep and sensitive relationship be only physical, we asked. 'No,' prompt came the answer from Edanna and Veerappa of the same village. 'Our god too lives in the forest.' So it is even their temple. And to harm it is to heap contempt on the creator.

Almost all the tribals are animist, and, therefore, have a great respect for nature. Their social code is based on an interpretation of the environment and forests are regarded as communal property. Being sacred, they cannot be owned by an individual. They also believe that nature preserves itself through diversity. 'We protect even small insignificant plants, for they can provide medicines,' observed Bheemla and Maniah. This mutual dependence is treated as a simple fact of life and upheld by tribal law.

We left behind the tribal heart-land and entered the din and bustle of Visakha-patnam amid clouds of yellow dust and increased heat. The massive forested hills gave way to flat countryside. We left behind the wild, lonely, exalted and exhilarating land of Valmiki, Purjas, Kotias and Doras whose zest for life never wanes.

We left behind a dedicated set of workers who made 'their service to their poor' their religion. We left behind Arku where rain may fail, but spring never fails to arrive to provide scent to the flowering Mahua trees. □

Oneself, indeed, is one's saviour, for what other saviour could there be? With oneself well controlled one obtains a saviour difficult to find.

Buddhism, Dhammapada, 160

Mundaka Upanishad

SWAMI SRIDHARANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

Relevance of the *Śāntipāṭha*

All the Upaniṣads begin with a *Śāntipāṭha*, peace-chant, which subsequently took the form of *maṅgalācaraṇa* in later literature. The significance is that, knowing full well that nothing happens in the world without the sanction of the Divine, however much the human being may cry at his limitations, this human humbly seeks advice, guidance and blessings from the Divine, so that his efforts are fruitful and without obstacles. In all the Upaniṣads, the first words invoke peace not only for oneself but also for balance in the whole universe: *Om*, the *satyam*, the *ṛtam*, is peace; you are one with the universe and the universe is one with you; as long as Oneness does not develop, there will be lack of balance and peace. The Vedic ṛṣis experienced that an individual is at peace with himself when he is at peace with his surroundings, when the *jīvātmā*, soul, has established an inseparable bond between itself and the *Viśvātmā*, Universal Soul: Brahman re-established, so to say, in the state of continuous communion with Itself, and at peace with Itself and the whole universe.

Śāntipāṭha

*Om! Bhadrāṁ karṇebhiḥ śṛṇuyāma devāḥ
bhadrāṁ paśyemā-kṣabhir-yajatrāḥ;
Sthirair-aṅgai-stuṣṭvāṁsas-tanūbhir
vyaśema devahitaṁ yadāyuh.
Om! śāntiḥ, śāntiḥ, śāntiḥ.*

Om! O effulgent ones (gods), may we with our ears hear what is propitious. While engaged in sacrifices, may we behold the propitious with our eyes. May we, with firm

and strong body and mind, lead a worshipful life doing work for the Divine.

Everything starts with *Om*. It consists of three alphabets—'a', 'u', 'm' and the *bindu*. When 'm' is uttered with the mouth closed, then there is an inner vibration known as the *nāda-bindu*. This vibration is due to the half *mātrā*, the short vowel (*m*), which is a nasal sound similar to the resonance that follows the striking of a gong or a bell. The main purpose here is to make the study fruitful to us. *Om* has been defined in various ways because it symbolises the whole gamut of human wisdom, perception, conception and intuition, the construction of the universe and everything found in the Vedas of *ādhyātmika-anubhūti*, spiritual experience.

Om can be subjectively interpreted: Corresponding to the four 'parts' of *Om*, there are four states of the *jīvātmā*. The *aham*, or 'I', fluctuates between these four states of awareness. In *jāgrat-avasthā* we are awake and alert. After some hours of hard work we are tired and go to sleep. That is *nidrā-avasthā*, in which there are dreams. This is also called *swapna-avasthā*.

While dreaming the person is not aware that he is dreaming; it is as real as waking experience. He knows he was dreaming only when he wakes up and compares his surroundings with the dream-experience. Then he realizes that the latter was not real. The third stage is *susupti*, deep, dreamless, undisturbed sleep, on waking up from which some time is taken to remember

where one is and what the time is. One is not aware of the space-time dimension of *jāgrat* in *susupti*, and only gradually they soak in on waking. Then one says of his experience: 'Sukham aham asvāpsam, na kiñcid-avediṣam, Oh, I had such a wonderful deep sleep. I did not know anything.'

The fourth stage of awareness is *turīya-avasthā*. Going into *nirvikalpa samadhi*, the *aham* merges with Brahman, and the experience is *ayam ātmā brahma, aham brahmāsmi*. This occurs only through one's continued disciplined effort under the guidance of the *guru* and with the blessings of the Divine.

It cannot be described, being beyond the realm of relativity, in which alone words can be used. In this state the phenomenal world totally disappears, and one is identified with the Essence of the universe which is brought out in the *nāda-bindu* of the *Om*. 'A' suggests the *jāgrat-avasthā* of man, 'u' the *swapna-avasthā*, 'm' the *susupti-avasthā*, and the *ḥ* *nāda-dhvani*, the *turīya-avasthā* the indescribable stage of mergence of the *jīvātmā* with the *Paramātmā*.

Om also suggests the forty-nine letters of the alphabet in their various permutations and combinations in the Sanskrit language. The *nāda* suggests the purpose of language, which goes beyond it (language): *yato vāco nivartante aprāpya manasā saha*, without attaining which (Brahman) speech rebounds together with the mind. Language is a vehicle through which man can go to a level beyond language—this is how a grammarian-*sādhaka* and a physicist can look at *Om*.

The objective interpretation of *Om* is the pillar on which the concept of Oneness of the *jagat*, universe, is based. The universe, can be classified into three categories. Either an object of the universe is *sthūla*, gross,

concrete, perceivable by the senses; that is, seen, heard, touched, smelled and tasted. These are the manifestations of the material world. Or it is subtle; it is causal. The gross aspect is symbolized by the first alphabet *a*. The *sthūla jagat* is: that which constantly changes, *gacchati iti jagat*. Like the water of a fast flowing river the *jagat* is never the same. It does not come back again, but flows like a continuous stream in time-space (*deśa-kāla*). So *deśa-kāla* are the underlying strata in which the continuous change of the *sthūla jagat* is taking place.

The *u* stands for the *sūkṣma-rūpa*, subtle form, of gross things. The senses have an upper and lower range beyond which they cannot perceive, though we can find ways to increase this range. For example, we have been able to increase or decrease the wave length of sound to bring it within hearing. Still, sounds exist which we do not hear with our ears. So with these subtle objects beyond the gross form. The *sūkṣma jagat*, which is behind the manifested gross world, is not readily perceivable unless one's faculties or instruments are developed to bring it within the parameters of our experience.

The *m* suggests the causal principle *kāraṇa*. Why does one see the world as such when it is not as it appears to be? Why does one seek permanency in this transient world? Everyone knows that, being born he will die. But none is prepared to face the truth. He holds on to permanence because of the basic misconception, *ajñāna*, which causes the world to appear and because of which he is unable to grasp the Truth. This is the original cause of all misery. Anything done in the *sthūla* or *sūkṣma jagat* without keeping in mind their divine Cause, Source, brings suffering. Thus, this *not keeping in mind*, ignoring, the Cause is the *ādi, original, kāraṇa*, cause, of all suffering. In other words, not understanding the truth of One-

(Continued on page 258)

From Students

Swami Vivekananda—The Patriot-Monk

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Swamiji was a monk. Some people may say that for a monk the whole universe is his own land and so there can be no distinction as his own country and a foreign land. Still, fortunately for us, Swamiji, a man with a great heart, was born in India, and he appeared on the world arena to uplift the poor, the illiterate, the downtrodden, and the destitute masses of the world. He inherited this spirit from his parents.

Swamiji used to think about the political independence of India, and in order that we may protect our independence in the proper way, he gave us a torch of understanding. In his famous speech, 'My Plan of Campaign', Swamiji suggested three qualities for a patriot: (1) Sincerity and a great heart to feel, (2) finding the ways and means to relieve the miseries of the countrymen, and (3) firmness to implement those means. Swamiji was a saint. The word 'saint' apparently has nothing to do with patriotism. But his patriotism was great and intense, and cannot be measured by ordinary people. One must reach a certain level to understand his teachings and feelings. Being a monk full of love, he could not bear the suffering of mankind. To quote Pundit Nehru, 'He was the tonic of the age.' He was like a living flame, and anybody who came in contact with him was inspired by his teachings and ideas. Swamiji got the inspiration from Sri Ramakrishna to uplift the miserable, the poor, and the neglected.

No nation can prosper without patriotism. Patriotism can only be awakened by following the commands of such a great leader as Swamiji. Let me quote Mahatma Gandhi: 'The patriotism in me was thousand times magnified when I read Swami Vivekananda.'

Now since the harmony and unity of our country are at stake, we, the young generation, must stand united, face the challenges of the present day problems, and find a solution to them. Swamiji is our inspiration. His hopes lie in us, as he believed that we are solely responsible for the future of our nation. Swamiji said, 'You must not depend on foreign help. Nations, like individuals, must help themselves. This is real patriotism. If a nation cannot do that, its time has not yet come. It must wait. Work unto death. I am with you; and when I am gone, my spirit will work with you. It is better, far better to die in the field of duty preaching truth rather than to die like a worldly worm.'

Although he was a sannyasin and had sacrificed all the attachments of life, he could not give up his love for India. This fact was confirmed by Sister Nivedita. She said that when Swamiji uttered the five letters, 'I-N-D-I-A', the onrush of emotion on his face was pronounced.

In an appeal to his countrymen, Swamiji asked them to be brave and bold and to proclaim proudly, 'I am an Indian; every Indian is my brother. The ignorant Indian, the poor and neglected Indian, the Brahmin Indian, the pariah Indian is my brother. The Indian is my life-blood; India's gods and goddesses are my God. The soil of India is my highest heaven. The good of India is my good.'

Swamiji prayed to God to make him a Man. We, the youth of today, should try to be real human beings in the eyes of Swamiji. This is the best tribute to Swamiji's patriotism for India. □

Swami Vivekananda—The Patriot-Monk

MISS SARVANI GHOSH

Miss Josephine MacLeod, a disciple of Swamiji, once asked him, 'Swamiji, how can I help you in the best way?' Swamiji gave a short reply. He only said, 'Love India.' Perhaps Miss MacLeod thought from the answer that Swamiji needed money for India. That day she

* Talks delivered during the Vivekananda Youth Day celebration observed on 12 February, 1995 at Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta.

could not even imagine what a tremendous thing Swamiji really asked of her. It was as if Sri Ramakrishna was asking Girish Chandra Ghosh for the latter's 'power of attorney'!

Swamiji discovered India not from the pages of history or geography books. He recognized her after walking the whole length and breadth of his motherland on foot, as an itinerant monk, in the light of first-hand experience. The total image of the soul of India was revealed to his eyes only because he identified himself heart and soul with India's innumerable social levels. To him India became like the mystic syllable for repetition (*mantra*)—the chief note of his life-music.

Whenever any one passed an adverse remark about India, the warrior-spirit of Swamiji would flash out despite his saffron robe. Bankimchandra Chatterjee also invoked his native land as 'mother'; but Swamiji not only called her 'mother', but also said, 'Your motherland is the only God to be worshipped.' Someone raised a controversy on this uncompromising patriotism of Swamiji—'A sannyasin should look upon all with an even attitude by giving up any special attachment for his own country.' To this Swamiji's candid reply was, 'How can one who doesn't feed his own mother look after another's mother?' That is why the first duty, even of a monk, is to love his motherland. Love for one's own land is the first step of the staircase which gradually leads to universal love.

To him India was not merely his political or geographical motherland. He knew very well that the whole world will survive only if India, the symbol of truth, peace, and purity, survives. So he went to the West and, standing on the platform of the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, declared that India has to rise in order to lead the world. Today we find that the whole world is turning to India with a thirsty look, just with the hope of finding her life-giving tonic, which is called *dharma* or spirituality. On the other hand Swamiji also wanted that India should learn science and technology from the West. He used to dream of a new, brighter, future India arising beyond the glory of the past and beyond the despair of the present, made up of a fine blending of the spirituality of the East with the modern

science and technology of the West.

Swamiji's fiery spirit initiated a band of young freedom-seekers of India. His inspiration set ablaze the flame of the Freedom Movement. But he foresaw the possibility of sectarianism and other divisive forces that might creep in on the trail of nationalism—the conflicting forces of caste, creed, colour, and language. So he embraced the whole nation in a spirit of brotherhood and thus held before our eyes a complete undivided form of India. The basis of this indivisibility is, in Swamiji's view, religion.

Swamiji perceived the impending corruption in values of the modern and future India. So he suggested the dissemination of religion, education, methods of organization and national consciousness as the greatest need of a nation whose life pulsed in the illiterate poor's huts. Also, for the unfettered progress of the country, he felt the need of worship of the neglected womenfolk. As a bird cannot fly with a single wing, so also a race cannot rise merely on the strength of its menfolk. So he felt the need for awakening the women by imparting education to them. But that education should not be merely based on learning by rote—it should be a part and parcel of one's life.

Swamiji gave the responsibility of rebuilding such an India to the youth of the country in whom lay his whole faith: in those who are full of aspiration, strong, firm in resolve, and sharp in brain. Indeed, the people of India rediscovered India through Swamiji's patriotic vision. Swamiji made India's joys, sorrows, humiliation and everything his own. Through his lectures and writings he gave the solutions to all the problems of India, and by loving India and Indians from the core of his heart, he himself became 'Condensed India'. □

The companionship of the holy and the wise is one of the main elements of spiritual progress.

—Sri Ramakrishna

Review Article

LIVING WISDOM: VEDANTA IN THE WEST: edited by Pravrajika Vrajaprana; Vedanta Press, Hollywood, Calif.; 1994; pp. 299; price not stated..

I

Commenting on new ways of reading Vedanta texts Francis X. Clooney says (in what seems to me the most significant essay in this valuable volume): 'When one has mastered the texts, one comes to see how it is that texts are no longer needed. But until that time, one must turn to texts if one seeks access to the truth of Vedanta; until that time what one reads and how one reads it makes a difference.'

Here is a broad frame of reference to read *Living Wisdom*. This is not just a (routine?) sequel to its distinguished predecessors: *Vedanta for the Western World* and *Vedanta for Modern Man*. While reprinting some essays from those two, the present volume transcends their rather 'defensive' nature. At least two tangible features bear this out.

First, the title: Vedanta no longer *for* but *in* the West. Obviously Vedanta is visibly 'in'. As Clooney puts it: 'Vedanta flourishes *in* the West of today but in its own Western way, thoughtful literate readers and writers of every background and interest are contributing to this new flourishing on this new soil, giving Vedanta new roots and branches, new names and forms.' So much for an apparently pre-positional change of 'in' for 'for'. One can even say: this volume reflects not the pre- but the post-position of Vedanta. For instance, compare the pioneering essay by Isherwood and the one by Atmarupananda. The difference is striking; for Isherwood Vedanta appeals to the intelligent sceptic; for Atmarupananda (an 'American' Swami) Vedanta now offers 'nothing less than a new basis for civilization. And for the individual a path opening

into the infinite.'

The 'in' thing seems to me no accident; it is no mere coincidence that the journal from the London Vedanta centre is from Jan-Feb 1995 issue called simply *Vedanta*, the earlier archaeological/colonial tag 'for East and West' being dropped; the editors feel 'this is more pertinent and thus more powerful title' (see *Vedanta* Letter from the Editors, Jan-Feb, 1995, p. 5). Moreover, apart from the Vedanta centres, there is now a considerable body of painstaking, pioneering scholarship of the history of Vedanta in America as in, for instance, the doctoral dissertation, 'The Swami in America', by Carl T. Jackson. Of course, we have fine individual studies of the pioneering work of Swamiji as, for instance, notably, *The Unopened Gift* by the Starks.

The second point of visibility is that 'the new roots and branches' as found in this volume are substantially as read by Americans or by those whose absorption of America made the Vedanta acquire specifically American responses. Out of the substantial number of 43 essays 21 are by American writers including American-born swamis and nuns; ten by 'Indian' swamis who pioneered the Vedanta phenomenon in America. They are immediate successors to Swamiji, and their work—notably Nikhilananda's *The Gospel* and Prabhavananda's *The Bhagavad Gita* translation—like the gentle dew nourished the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Vedanta seedling.

The inference is slightly disconcerting: does 'West' mean 'American' or is *America the West*? On the contrary, there is a considerable body of English and European responses. I have specifically, in mind,

writers like Kenneth Walker, recently Hans Torwesten, Marcus Toyne and Barbara Foxe, and there may be more in the French centre's journal, which, together, it seems to me, constitute the western Vedanta tradition (cf. *Echoes of Vedanta in the Far East*, Ramakrishna Sarada Vedanta Society of New South Wales, Australia, 1994).

But then this anthology is substantial by any criterion: 43 essays forming a remarkable spectrum of practitioners of Vedanta. Essays by early enthusiasts and pioneers such as Aldous Huxley, Gerald Heard (still unique in his clarity and astonishing range) and, of course, the compulsorily readable, irrepressibly creative Chris(topher) Isherwood (his transparent commitment to truth as learnt from Vedanta led him to write an 'unconventional' but fiercely candid autobiography) jostle with the more mellow (less pontifical?) Huston Smith, Albert Sadler, Richard Schiffman, the biographer of Ramakrishna, Anne Lowenkopf and others. Similarly, there are 'Indian' swamis appearing here: Bhajananandaji's essay on Prayer is, in every sense, an outstanding piece, so are those by and large by Lokeswaranandaji and Tyagananda. And, easily the most remarkable thing is the distinct voice of women Vedantins (the editor being a nun is itself a pointer to the emergence of 'strident' women's spirituality as an antidote to 'feminist' excesses).

II

With this range, the essays 'alternate' between the two poles so conveniently identified by the publishers' classificatory tag: 'Eastern Philosophy/Personal Growth.' The former accounts for the section of 'expository' essays on 'Perspectives': the Vedantic views on Harmony of Religions, its attitude to other religions, etc. The rest of the three sections of the volume deal primarily with practice and (recent) paradigms of Vedanta.

What is the appeal of Vedanta to such

a range of thinkers? A few responses recur. The basic frame is provided by Huxley. With characteristic clarity and directness he says: for 'those of us who are not congenitally the members of an organized church, who have found that humanism and nature worship are not enough, who are not content to remain in the darkness of ignorance, the squalor of vice or the other squalor of respectability,' the 'minimum working hypothesis,' which perennial philosophy (implicitly Vedanta) offers is something specially valuable for 'intelligently skeptical people' who can express 'intelligent doubts.'

In more explicit terms, Isherwood holds Vedanta as a uniquely significant answer to 'life's subtlest riddle: the riddle of human boredom' stemming from the frightening belief that the individual is 'a constellation of desires and impulses.' This is, in fact, a curious revolution—to cite Huston Smith, 'the Revolution of Rising Expectations.' This 'loss of faith in transcendence' in fact meant several spurious gods bound inevitably to fail. This includes(d?) the Marxist myth of 'a classless utopia', which has turned out, in retrospect, to be 'the most monstrous superstition the human mind has ever produced.'

Thus, 'modernity's coming to see its gods for what they are—idols in their inability to deliver what was expected of them—is the most important event of the twentieth century', says Huston Smith. In effect, as Pravrajika Vrajaprana puts it, in an ethos where 'God is coolly marginalised' and 'solutions are jerry-rigged band-aids over tectonic plates', the cool, passionless good sense of Vedanta is, in the richly evocative idiom of Richard Schiffman, 'sparking some interesting fireworks along the cutting edge of our evolving Western civilization.'

The infinite potential of Vedanta, in the light of this background, is imbedded, obviously, in its essential, practical spirituality. To vary the remark made by

Albert Sadler, if 'Ramakrishna'—the most significant paradigm of Vedanta in its multifaceted richness—is 'a tree rooted in India but is not an Indian tree,' Vedanta is a tree rooted in India but is not an Indian tree. And as Atmarupananda says, 'this is the paradigm the world needs desperately', for, 'it is vast', inclusive of traditions and yet 'works outside all traditions.' In short, Vedanta *works* because (a) its specific core is universal without any culture-specific idiosyncrasies; (b) it offers modes of transcendence which do not despise or dislodge other modes of knowledge such as sense-rooted, sense-based science; (c) rooted in 'a clear vision of the essence of spirituality' and focussing on personal transformation—'it is not what we say we believe but what we are that matters'—Vedanta offers nothing less than 'a new paradigm which the world needs desperately.'

III

But the question is: are these claims impressively epistemological, or are they demonstrably practical? The question is crucial, specially in the context of America because as Marianne Williamson in her best-selling *A Return to Love* (a significant commentary on that wonderful volume *A Course in Miracles*) rightly says: 'Americans are not that big on philosophy. We're very big on action, however, once we understand the reason for it' (*A Return to Love*, New York: Harper Collins, 1994, p. xvii).

That Vedanta is appealing because it is 'big in action' understood and validated by 'reason' is evident simply by comparing the essays by Indian swamis with those by American monks/nuns. The former are marked by a long tradition of epistemological certainty grounded (?) in an idiom well-defined but never (or if 'never' is too offensive, add 'substantially') subjected to the rigorous process of contemporisation, to the, so to say, different rhythms of a largely empirical mind. These are impressive—

often deeply intuitive—but seem to assume too many *a priori* (often exasperating) ontological beliefs easy, *samskara*-wise, for the Hindu to believe, but virtually incapable of transcending a large dose of abstraction.

In sharp contrast, the essays by the Americans (both monastic and lay) are the result, strikingly, of a felt sense of disorder and, correspondingly, an equally insistently felt need to discover and practise tried and proven methods of transcending the sense of disorder. I would in my own inept way describe this quality as rooted in a constant effort to match the words of the wisdom tradition—Vedanta—with the rhythms of lived life in that (seething volcano? of) cultural pluralism which America is.

From this perspective, as the editor Vrajaprana says, 'Vedanta movement has a strong literary basis' ('literary' is a connotative word, but it fills my mind with a sense of nostalgia—the breathless anxiety with which as a graduate student of English literature in a remote corner of a small town in South India, I used to wait way back in the 60s for my father's copies of *Vedanta and the West*! Its ceasing publication is for me an irredeemable disappointment). Therefore, if we look at the 'structure' of the American essays we notice traces, in many pieces (by the American contributors), of some of the features of Indic text traditions. The very first one by Isherwood, for instance, seems to me to be modelled (consciously?) on the Upanishadic dialogue structure (perhaps, Socratic for the Western reader), and the dialogue between the doubting Christopher and the reassuring interior self is (an American?) transfiguration of the 'exotic' 'two-birds of the self-same tree' analogy in the Upanishads. Similarly, the structure of Huston Smith's essay is not only the most concise and remarkably clear summation of post-modernist thought (who can, of course, do this better than he, the author of the classic *Beyond Post-Modernism*), but also seems to approximate, for a Hindu reader,

to the traditional Hindu expository model of *upakrama-upasainhāra aikyātā, abhīyāsa, apurvātā*, etc.

Similarly, the Vedantic art of narrativising the truths and pathways of inner life (cf. *The Yoga-Vasishtha*) is analogously present in the essays like 'A Stone in Water', 'The Art of Building Shrines', 'A Psychologist Looks at Vedanta', the short but richly evocative piece *The Banyan Tree* (*sutra*-like in its syntax, it is loaded with farranging *dhvani*, suggestion), and above all 'The Mother Goddess'.

The overall result is in Gerald Heard's inimitable words, 'considerable modification of the things that are done as well as of the thoughts that are thought.' This modification is, in fact, as Gargi puts it (with the quiet authority, *adhikara*, she has earned over the years with those monuments of total dedication, *Sivami Vivekananda: New Discoveries*) 'to change the current of their thought or rather to introduce into that current a strong dynamic element of spirituality that would transform it.'

Among the essays that reflect these tendencies I personally prefer 'The Mother Goddess' by Anne Lowenkopf as potentially the most 'explosive model of Vedanta to hit' the West. Far from being a hideous goddess thirsting grotesquely for the blood of humans, the Hindu Devi is seen as a paradigm for the emerging image of woman, her role, power and function. Anne confesses to 'the thrill of excitement at' her 'discovery of a Goddess who did not punish the created for what went wrong in her creation, who took the heat for evil and death and yet was untouched by both.' Moreover, 'empathy for a deity who *exists alone and copes alone* grows stronger as more and more young people have been raised by single parents, and more are coping with the difficulties of being a single parent.' And the conviction that 'you need a strong mother who will go to battle for you when you are in trouble', seems to be growing. 'Single

parents who find themselves battling for survival in their work worlds, battling traffic to get home at the end of the day, battling to feed their kids and educate their kids and keep their house reasonably sane resonate to the concept one can be both and at the same time nourisher and warrior.'

Indeed, who would have thought that the voice, the resonating, of the Mother of Ramakrishna, of the Dakshineswar-on-the-Ganga, would be heard so far? And, strangely, that all this would be merely coming home and the search for, as in the case of Galland cited in the article, the Tibetan Buddhist Mother Goddess Tara would end in the pilgrimage to Poland to the Black Madonna? As Anne Lowenkopf clinching the matter says, 'What is important for us [women] today is that the ability to catch the Great Goddess for ourselves in our own vision is open for us *if we want to reach for it*' (emphasis added). Obviously feminists would find here a text that certainly steers clear of strident textual/sexual politics and shows a way out of the impasse created by gender biases.

If the *Devi Māhātmya* is thus inscribed in the American (feminist?) ethos, Pravrajika Brahma-prana uses the inner life strategies of Vedanta to inform the formula for 'a healthy plan for a balanced spiritual life.' Thus 'Do something for yourself' becomes the overall plan of watching and eventually controlling the monkey within: the mind. Similarly, 'Do something for someone else' is seen as an imperative warranted not only by Christian charity but also by the Vedantic insight of neighbour as 'our very self.' And 'Do something you don't want to do' is the Vedantic *vicāra*, persistent self-introspection, resulting in the process of thinking clearly and acting calmly. Similarly, the compulsive injunction for physical fitness—'Do a physical exercise'—is not a fad but an attempt to preserve the purity and sanctity of the body as 'the temple of God.' (To find the oft-repeated '*sharīra-*

mādyam khalu dharmā sādhanam given an American base and setting signals indeed the arrival of Vedanta!) The next injunction 'Do a mental exercise' involves progressively intensified meditation and study. Finally, 'count your blessings' is seen as, in its deeper significance, culminating in the Holy Mother's living wisdom: 'If you want peace of mind, do not find fault with others.'

Extending this insight Swami Viprananda sees the Mother's attitude of 'detachment amidst the trials and tribulations of life' ('sympathetic uninvolvedness' in the jargon of literature) as comparable to the metaphor 'a stone in water'. Used by an eighteenth century French Jesuit advising a nun 'regarding her anxieties, fears and distractions of mind', it means 'allowing them to drop as a stone drops into water.'

This subtle art of letting go is, in the contemporary (not specifically American) context not so much 'detachment' as 'dedication'. This is vividly described by Brahmachari Veda Chaitanya as 'the Art of Building Shrines'. Whether it is building a shrine for Swamiji in a room in Pasadena where he stayed or making 'a stand for an old pump motor', 'the same attention to detail, the same concentration of mind, and the same devotional feelings' should infiltrate even apparently trivial jobs. All jobs are fields in which with the right attitude 'action can be converted into acts of worship.' In the exalted imagery of the *Gita* this is the injunction of 'offering everything to the Lord', an attitude 'limited only by imagination with regard to spiritualising everyday activities.' Purged of selfish motives, freed from expectation and exempt from 'drudgery', such action is what Swami Rama Tirtha has described as 'the art of religion, [which] consists of making every little bit of experience an occasion for a leap into the Infinite.' This is equipping oneself with, in the idiom of Pravrajika Brahma-prana, 'spiritual jujitsu'! With such shift in perception 'sorrows become the spring-

board for the soul and its wings to fly' and 'any burden can be lifted.'

Viewed in terms of this foregrounding, another strategy is suggested by Vedarupananda: what he calls 'the practice of self-affirmations'. The affirmation that we are the Self is the base, and to make this real one should select passages that express 'the highest truths' (or formulate a set of affirmations for oneself in tune with one's nature) and 'focus on the meaning, not on the sound', and this gives one the necessary energy for our daily round of activities. Unlike japa—a linear activity—this kind of contemplation is a spiral and enables us gradually to acquire hegemony over Smritinagar: the city of our Lost Memory. Indeed, the *Mahavakyas*, the self-affirmations chosen, become seeds of energising everyday activity with contemplative centrality.

The Living Wisdom of Vedanta 'framed' in this volume is thus seen as equipping us effectively for life, for, to use the metaphor of Pico Iyer's deeply moving, exquisitely chiselled piece, both the 'Silence' and the noise. We neither shy away from the noise of activity nor do we get buried in artificial cessation of activity misnamed the silence of contemplation. 'There is,' as Iyer says, '—of course—a place for noise, as there is for daily selves. There is a place for roaring, for the shouting exultation of a baseball crowd, for hymns and spoken prayers, for orchestra and cries of pleasure. Silence, like all the best things, is best appreciated in its absence; if noise is the signature tune of the world, silence is the music of the other world, the closest thing we know to the harmony of the spheres.' If one were to find a typical American affirmation of this truth it is Hemingway's 'grace under pressure' (which I used to think is the most concise American definition of Yoga!)

IV

My American literature instructor used to talk about the American dream inevitably

ending in disenchantment. Perhaps he is not aware of the quiet movement of Vedanta giving the dream its inevitable correlative in the redemptive vision and wisdom of its timeless perspectives, strategies and paradigms. Thus *LIVING WISDOM*—beautifully designed in a reader-friendly way—is a live witness to the emergence of practical spirituality at the core of Western life and thought. (I was delighted that a remarkable passage on reincarnation from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* found its way into an unusually fascinating anthology, *Soul An Archaeology*, edited by Phil Cousineau; Thorsons/Harper Collins, 1995; pp. 213–14.) Far-ranging in its concerns, amazingly prac-

tical in its basic aims—and above all representing the cream of the thought exemplified in the great modern mentors of Vedanta, Sri Ramakrishna, Swamiji and Mother,—*LIVING WISDOM* is a book to be kept constantly within one's reach. A dip into it is exhilarating.

I have only two 'appeals' to make to the editor: Will it be possible to have an inexpensive 'Asian' edition? Can *Vedanta and the West* be 'revived' in, obviously, a new format? □

Dr. M. Sivaramakrishna
Hyderabad

Mundaka Upanishad

(Continued from page 250)

ness of *jīvātma* and *Paramātmā* is known as *ādi kārana*, *ādi ajñāna*. Man's inability to analyse this world correctly and thoroughly to grasp the truth behind the whole play of the universe is suggested by the alphabet *m*.

But so far nothing positive has been suggested about the Absolute. It exists. It is both immanent and transcendent. When I see you as human, I see you partially. When I see you as a manifestation of the Divine, I see you a little more completely. And when I experience that in essence you and I and every particle of the universe are essentially One—that is seeing in totality, *parama jñāna*, Absolute Knowledge. The Absolute manifested in multifarious names and forms is, in its absoluteness, also beyond the diversity. This is suggested by the *ardha-mātrā, nāda-*

dhvani (the nasal concluding sound). It suggests that there is only One reality in the universe, and It is manifesting in the *sthūla*, *sūkṣma*, and *ādi kārana* or *ajñāna*, and this last is what prevents one from seeing the Absolute in its totality as *nirvikāra*, *nirvikalpa*, *nirākāra*, *Sacchidānanda Ātmā*.

The study of the symbol 'Om' is not only confined to the scriptures, but it is the basis of all knowledge, science and technology, the *aparā-vidyā*. All branches of knowledge, scientific and philosophical, take into consideration, the gross and the subtle, the reason or the cause, and at the root of everything is the Spirit, or my Self.

(to be continued)

Very few understand that the aim of human life is to see God.

—Sri Ramakrishna

A Sense of Boundarylessness*

AJIT S. GOPAL

It is often said that history repeats itself; but it is by no means the same people who are necessarily called upon to perform the repetitive process. There is nothing wrong with repetition so long as the right lessons are learnt by humanity.

The American management experts have created a new, fascinating expression, and, as expected, credited themselves with its coinage. It is known as a 'sense of boundarylessness'.

Nothing else could perhaps so aptly demonstrate the spirit of the new age, especially in the Western world, with political and economic boundaries disappearing fast, corporate giants relocating themselves and skilled workers finding new, more challenging opportunities far away from their own shorelines.

Isn't history repeating itself, for the Indian people, that is? Time was when our ancestors not only spoke of but practised boundarylessness. Contrary to assertions made by some historians, such boundarylessness existed much before the arrival of the British rulers in India, who, for different reasons, took away hordes of our people to their newly conquered lands—never to return home in their own lifetimes.

Several hundred years before the advent of the British, our people, mostly merchants and traders, circled the globe for new opportunities, mingled with peoples of different cultures, spread their own civilization and imbibed that of others.

The world was none the worse for it. But tragic interruptions occurred and the clock was set backwards for our people who, over the years, lost all sense of adventure, till, happily, some years ago when new chimes started to be heard across the horizons.

But the Americans say they discovered boundarylessness. The principal protagonist of this magnificent concept is no less a business stalwart than John Welch, the chief executive officer of General Electric. When I read of Welch's definition of boundarylessness, I was reminded of what our own J.R.D. Tata used to say when Welch was a small boy.

Of boundarylessness, Welch said, 'It's the ability to work up and down the hierarchy, across functions and geographies, and with suppliers and customers...We've gotten rid of the Not Invented Here Syndrome. We'll go anywhere for an idea.'

Explaining the concept further, Welch said, 'When there are no limits to whom you'll see, where you'll go, what you'll touch, results are remarkable. Everywhere we go, someone is doing something better. Finding that better idea is rewarded at GE.'

Some pessimists amongst us will say that no matter what the origin of the idea may be, horses and donkeys will be labelled together. At the GE and other American corporations, they know how to separate the good and the bad ideas and to reward the honest, hardworking and diligent ones.

* Courtesy *The Hindusthan Times*, New Delhi.

In this respect, it is relevant for us to

recall the oft-repeated expression about ourselves: The Giant in Slumber. It isn't one, but several giants which are in slumber simultaneously—the giants of education, industry, tourism, to name a few.

Once again, the world is beginning to say that the Indian giant is about to be woken from its slumber. 'And you'll see what will happen then...' The whole world is waiting to see.

But where is the tangible Action Plan for the year 2000? Wherever we go we see evidence (and why must we always compare ourselves with Lesotho?) of what people and nations are planning to achieve at the turn of the century. We seem to be waiting for things to happen, perhaps at the behest of others.

In recent years, learning from Western, mainly American business practices, some of our magazines and corporate house journals have adopted the praiseworthy practice of ranking India's most admired companies in terms of marketing and other relevant criteria.

One company journal, which ranked 30 organizations, gave itself the overall score of 16. Though it did well in criteria like offering value for money, product innovativeness and superiority to competitors' products, it kept driving home the lesson to its

employees all over India that 'we must make every attempt to further improve our ranking.'

Though there are exceptions, in this particular instance, only private sector companies were compared in the ruthless evaluation which was commissioned by an outside consumer research agency. If we are to make any sense of our current craze for liberalisation and globalisation of the Indian economy, the public sector companies must get into this race towards quality.

This is a clean and acceptable method of distinguishing the good from the bad. Horses from donkeys. Good performers and the sluggards.

It would be wrong for us to expect an initiative from the Government. This is a field which rightfully belongs to the consumer organization in our country, which, given some novel legislation from the Government, have demonstrated a tendency for some zealous action.

Judging from the example set by some private companies, our consumer bodies need to set standards by which they are lavish in praising corporations which are good citizens, while at the same time losing no sleep in blacklisting those which are bent upon keeping the country in the old century. □

Let us perfect the means; the end will take care of itself. For the world can be good and pure, only if our lives are good and pure. Therefore, let us purify ourselves. Let us make ourselves perfect.

—Swami Vivekananda

PRACTICAL VEDANTA

ON FACING SUFFERING AND DEATH

Her hair and clothing wet, wailing and devastated, Vishakha was a picture of gloom and misery. Seeing her anguish and pain, Bhagavan Buddha was deeply moved and asked, 'What have you done to yourself Vishakha? I am amazed to see your terrible condition. How has this come about?'

'My grandson is dead, my Lord, and I am in deep sorrow', she barely whispered.

'Do you know how many men and women die everyday in Shravasti?' Buddha questioned.

'I do not know for certain, but I know that everyday someone or the other departs from this world', Vishakha replied.

'Do you feel sad for all those men and women of Shravasti?'

'Yes, my Lord.'

'And for their children?'

'I feel that they too are like my own children.'

'If some child or the other dies every day, Vishakha, then will you continue to remain in mourning for a lifetime?'

'No, my Lord.'

'Understand this Vishakha: He who has a hundred children will suffer a hundred sorrows; he, again, who has one child, will suffer a single sorrow. But he who is alone will suffer no sorrow on account of anyone. To remain happy and at peace in this world, there is only one remedy. You should have no attachments. Neither hold anyone dear nor have attachment for anyone. One who wants to remain sorrowless and serene should live in this world fully detached.'

Reviews & Notices

RAMANA MAHARSHI—A BIBLIOGRAPHY; Compiled by K. Subramanyam, Indian Council of Philosophical Research, New Delhi; 1994; pp. 198; Rs. 125/-.

This Bibliography on Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi is published with a view to take stock of all the philosophical activities associated with Sri Ramana and his life and teachings over the last five or six decades.

Though Ramana Maharshi did not philosophize systematically like an academic philosopher, through the power of his bright piercing eyes and his simple but luminous universal teachings free from prejudice, dogma and tradition, he attracted a host of spiritual seekers from both the East and the West. Numerous articles, poems, and books on Sri Maharshi have been written. All this written material is meticulously compiled here in the form of a Bibliography on him. There are three divisions of the work: a Subject Index, an Author Index, and a Title Index.

Under the Subject Index (Part One), books and articles have been alphabetically indexed under various heads like: Anecdotes, Articles on Bhagavan's works, His grace/miracles, Conversation, How Bhagavan came to me, His message, Homage and Tributes to him, Poems on Bhagavan, Ramana Literature, the Ramana Movement, Ramana Philosophy/Way, Ramana Teachings, Reminiscences, and Symposia/Seminars. The names of the authors under each subject group are also alphabetically arranged. Part Two—the Author Index, gives authors' names, titles of the books/journals, places and names of publishers, years of publication and paginations. In the Title Index (Part Three), titles on Sri Ramana are alphabetically arranged with the names of authors, no. and volume of journals, names of books, etc. with paginations. In the beginning some abbreviations and names of books, journals

and periodicals from where written material on Sri Maharshi has been collected are listed.

This Bibliography—a fitting offering of love, devotion and reverence of the compiler for Sri Maharshi, will certainly be well-received by scholars and researchers in the area of Indian philosophy in general and the philosophy of Sri Ramana Maharshi in particular. Printing and get-up are excellent.

Dr. Chetana Mandavia, Junagadh

BHAVĀNĪ - NĀMA - SAHASRA-STUTHĪ (Hymns of the 1000 names of the Divine Mother), with English translation and commentary; By Jankinath Kaul 'Kamal'; Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Srinagar, Kashmir; pp. 501; Rs. 63.50.

Hymnological literature has a long tradition in India, beginning in the Vedas and also continued in Jain and Buddhist sacred texts. Devotional hymns exist not only in the Tantras, Purāṇas and other Hindu scriptures, but also in the literary works of classical writers like Kālidāsa, Bhāravi and Bāṇa. The pattern of such compositions in Sanskrit was enriched by philosophers like the great Śaṅkara, extending uninterrupted into the present era with hymns such as those by Swami Vivekananda. Its fluorescence in regional languages through many poet-saints in different parts of the country is a vast subject in its own right.

An important and devotionally potent part of all hymnology is the recitation and repetition of the Name. Early examples of what is called *Nāma Māhātmya* in India are the *Ādityahr̥daya* in the *Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa*, and the popular *Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma* from the *Mahābhārata*. The texts most used in the adoration of the Divine Mother are the *Durgā-Saptasafī* and the *Lalitā-Sahasranāma*, which form part, respectively, of the *Mārkaṇḍeya* and the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas*. All these hymns have remained integral ele-

ments of religious practices in India to this day.

The *Bhavānī-Nāma-Sahasra-Stutiḥ* is a part of the same ancient and still living tradition. Preserved in regular ritual use by the Pandit community of Kashmir, it is not equally well known in other parts of the country. The present publication is to be commended for extending the frontier of knowledge in this respect. It provides not only an authenticated original Sanskrit version, but also its first ever translation and exposition in English. Apart from thus being a valuable contribution to the corpus of Indian sacred literature as a whole, it is also a reminder of the pristine religious and cultural heritage of Kashmir.

As indicated by its title, this hymn contains one thousand names of Bhavānī, the Supreme Goddess, which also expound the mystic attributes of the divinity. The translator and commentator is a senior teacher and scholar of Sanskrit from Srinagar. He has prepared a critical edition based on the text obtaining in the commentary entitled the *Devīnāmavilāsa* by the 17th century Kashmiri savant Sahib Kaul. He has further drawn from that treatise for his explanation of each name, as also from various scriptural works, including Śaṅkara's *bhāṣya* on the *Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma*, and from other qualified sources. This lends more authority to his work, even as its language ensures it a wider currency.

The source of the present hymn is the *Rudrayāmala-Tantra*. The latter is no more extant in its entirety, another available extract from it being the *Vijñānabhairava*, a philosophical dissertation on Kashmir Śaivism. Scholars date the *yāmala* part of Tantra literature between the 6th and the 9th centuries AD. Geographically, the Tantras were categorized in the *kramas* or orders of Kashmir, Kerala, Gauda and Vilasa. The place of this text's origin is thus fairly evident.

Shri Kaul has described this hymn in his introduction as 'an index of the subject matter of the Śakti doctrine.' The worship of Śakti, the Mother Goddess, has a long history in Kashmir. Among the Śakti Pīthas of India, the Śārādā and the Trisandhyā exist

there. Kalhaṇa's *Rājataranginī* mentions the institution of *mātri* and *devī chakras* in the region. Prayers to the *kuladevīs* or family goddesses like Rājñā, Śārikā and Jvālā are still prevalent among Kashmiri Pandits. The present *stotra* is recited on special occasions, providing testimony to the continuity of an age-old tradition.

The writer states that the publisher 'desired that a correct edition of the book with relevant interpretation of Bhavānī's sacred names be brought out to be placed in the hands of the devotees. After deliberation it was decided that an elaborate commentary in English should be prepared for the English knowing people in general and Śakti Sādhakas in particular. This is obviously not only a work of scholarship, but also a labour of love and devotion. For use in rituals it includes, additionally, details for preliminary preparations, verses comprising the prologue and the conclusion outside the actual text, the mantras of the *Nāmāvali* offering, and a list of common names in other major hymns of the same nature.

The first of these one thousand holy names is *Mahāvidyā*, supreme knowledge. The last is *Sarva-maṅgalā-maṅgalā*, auspicious and beneficent for all. Each intervening link in the sacred chain has its own particularity, as described in the detailed commentary. The recitation of the whole with devotion, it is said in the Introduction, soothes the turbulent mind and can lead to the attainment of final beatitude and eternal peace. However difficult this may be for many, for each at least, some name may have a resonance of the Divinity which transcends all.

A.N.D. Haskar, Noida, U.P.

The Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad: English Commentary by Guru Nitya Chait-Yati; publ. D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd., New Delhi-15; 1994; pp. 656; Rs. 300/-.

The Upaniṣads are the fountain head of the spiritual tradition of the Hindus. They have recorded the speculative thinking of

the Vedic seers and sages, and inspire us even today in our metaphysical ventures. The total number of the Upaniṣads is not definite, as some of them are of later dates and people feel that some more could be produced in future. But the *Muktikā-Upaniṣad* has listed 108 well-known Upaniṣads belonging to all the four Vedas. Of them ten have commentaries by Ādi Śaṅkara, hence are better-known. The *Brhadāranyaka-Upaniṣad* (B.U.) is the biggest one in volume and profoundest in content, so says Sureśvara in his *Vārttika* (*brhatvādgranthato'rthācca*).

Usually the Upaniṣads are found in the last part of the Vedas. But the B.U. covers three of the four parts of the *Yajur-Veda*, namely, the *Brāhmaṇa*, the *Āraṇyaka* and the *Upaniṣad*. The last six chapters of the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* form the actual content of this Upaniṣad. It is also an *Āraṇyaka* in the sense that it is a book of the forest which treats of the symbolic meaning of the rituals and also in the sense of its being like a fecund rain-forest, full of wondrous forms of life. It is, of course, an Upaniṣad, as it follows the hymns, the rituals and the forest-books of the *Yajur-Veda* both in historical time and in the progression of philosophical understanding.

The Upaniṣads declare the pursuit of wisdom to be a pathway open to all. This Upaniṣad, most explicitly, removes some of the traditional barriers which attributed sacredness only to males of the highest class. The dialogue between Gārgya and King Ajātaśatru of Kāshī exhibits a Brāhmin petitioning the Kshatriya to be taught true wisdom. In another dialogue of the B.U. the most attentive and uncompromising student of the Upaniṣdic teacher is his wife Maitreyī, who could be satisfied with nothing less than immortality.

The book in hand is Volume I of a commentary on the B.U. It covers the first two chapters (containing 145 *mantras*) of the Upaniṣad, known as *Madhu-Kāṇḍa*. *Madhu* (honey) is the essence of flowers. The immortal Person is the essence or the ground of the gross elements. This ground is known as the Self or Brahman. The same Self expresses itself in many forms. The *Madhu-*

Kāṇḍa includes the *Āśvamedha*, *Udgītha* and *Madhu-Brāhmaṇas*. *Śravaṇa* is the most important means of receiving the wisdom in this Section. The Section stands apart as a comprehensive philosophy of the main Upaniṣads and of the Vedānta in general without any attempt being made to create a peg on which to hang anyone's private speculative systematization. Śaṅkara's Commentary, according to a few thinkers, made digression into his own philosophy. For this reason, as given by Sri Aurobindo, Guru Nitya Chaitanya has taken up the task of standing closer to the text rather than going into fortification of a particular school of thought.

The commentary by Nitya Chaitanya Yati (b. 1924-) is an experiential one. Every statement is substantiated by firsthand intuitive intimation of truth. It brings the poetry, myths and symbols of the B.U. alive, helping us to deepen our understanding of our own nature, human situation and the cosmos. It points to the reality underlying appearances and leads us away from confusion to the side of our Self—the Truth.

The commentator is in the spiritual hierarchy of Narayana Guru, the symbol of hope and redemption to the depressed classes of India. He is the direct disciple of Nataraja Guru after whom the Gurukula at Fernhill (Ooty) is named. He is fully familiar with the territory and has a comprehensive knowledge of the entire spectrum of Indian philosophical texts and their placement in the broader context of both Eastern and Western philosophical inquiry.

The volume under review provides transliteration (in Roman script) of the *mantras*, word-meanings and an exhaustive commentary. It has a General Introduction by the commentator and a Foreword by Ms Nancy Yielding of the East-West University of Brahmavidyā at Bainbridge Island, Washington (U.S.A.). It also has an Index of Sanskrit terms and another of general terms. It has been published as Number 2 in the series called 'Rediscovering Indian Literary Classics'. For students and scholars of the Indian Spiritual tradition the volume is an important addition.

Dr. S.P. Dubey, Jabalpur